

**LOTE (Language Other than
English) Communications
Program for the Vegetable
Industry**

Richard Mulcahy
AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: VG06066

VG06066

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**VG06066 - LOTE (Language Other than English) Communications
Program for the Vegetable Industry**

20 August 2009

Prepared by AUSVEG



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AUSVEG represents the interests of vegetable growers and assists growers in making sure the National Vegetable Levy is invested in Research and Development (R&D) that best meets the needs of the Australian vegetable industry.

This report brings together valuable information on Language Other Than English (LOTE) growers, a group that forms 40 per cent of Australia's vegetable industry and outlines how the communication barrier can be broken down.

Funding for this project is received in conjunction with Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) and Rural Industries Research Development Corporation (RIRDC).



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Media Summary

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that in 2003, there were approximately 4390 vegetable growing operations and 6,000 growers across Australia, producing more than \$1.7 billion worth of produce. Furthermore, a report conducted in 2005, the 'Vegetable Growers with A Language Other Than English Snapshot Report' identified that 40 per cent of Australian growers were from a Language Other Than English (LOTE) background.

In 2004/05, following the snapshot report, AUSVEG undertook the first "Vegetable Industry Communication Audit" to identify opportunities and communication gaps to growers, industry, government and the broader community. This audit identified growers with a LOTE as a group with particular communication needs that had to be addressed. HAL has responded to this need by investing in the LOTE project.

The LOTE project addressed these communication requirements, adhering to critical issues recommended in the 2005 snapshot report over a two year time frame.

This report brings together valuable information regarding LOTE growers, a group that forms 40 per cent of Australia's vegetable industry and outlines how the communication barrier can be broken down.

Key findings from this project are that translating material into the LOTE grower's primary language isn't the only solution. Research has shown that there are many components that need to be addressed to amalgamate LOTE growers into the vegetable industry.

The LOTE project provides information for the many sectors associated with the vegetable industry, including the National Vegetable Industry Communication Strategy, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), in particular the Levy Revenue Service (LRS) and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) through pesticides and chemical use.

Funding for this project is received in conjunction with Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) and Rural Industries Research Development Corporation (RIRDC).

Technical Summary

This report outlines the work conducted by AUSVEG, in determining the issues LOTE growers' face, as a result of English not being their first language

In 2005, a Vegetable Growers Snapshot Report found that 40 per cent of LOTE growers paid the National Vegetable Levy and didn't perceive any benefit from R&D project outcomes. This was a result of R&D projects being written and communicated for growers who speak English as their primary language.

The National Vegetable Levy, which is matched dollar for dollar by the Australian Government, funds R&D projects, directly benefiting growers. The goal of this project was to increase the uptake and adoption of National Vegetable Levy funded R&D project outcomes for LOTE growers.

According to the ABS, in 2004 there were 4390 vegetable growers in Australia (industry estimates are 5,470) producing 3.051 billion tonnes of vegetables, a total gross production value of \$2.35 billion.

In terms of geographic distribution, the vegetable industry has been relatively static between 1999 and 2005. Generally-speaking, vegetable production occurs throughout Australia, with the largest acreage in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Queensland is home to the largest number of growers and in 2005, the state accounted for 29 per cent of total vegetable growing operations in Australia.

The vegetable industry has attracted migrants in large numbers throughout Australia's history, and this trend continues today. However, an increase in LOTE growers, over recent years has seen the vegetable industry increase in production and output.

Research conducted by Step Communication in association with AUSVEG, has found that growers who speak a LOTE, are a group within the vegetable industry with requirements that need to be addressed, particularly with language barriers and cultural differences.

While there have been some effective strategies in the past with avenues in R&D projects, communication to LOTE growers has generally been limited and ad-hoc, leading to low levels of awareness of the National Vegetable Levy, R&D projects and poor integration into the broader industry.

The aim of this project was to integrate LOTE communication activities into the current National Vegetable Communication Strategy, delivered by AUSVEG. The project also aimed to raise awareness and provide an understanding of the vegetable industry structure, levy and responsibilities to LOTE growers, and increase LOTE grower participation in industry events.

This project also intended to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of LOTE growers in the broader vegetable industry, including the peak industry body.

The research also aimed to support LOTE growers and help them access and understand R&D outcomes, form community networks and integrate into the mainstream vegetable industry.

A focal point of this project was to explore all avenues, including translation, for the most effective way for growers to access R&D outcomes.

The purpose of this project was to also increase industry recognition of AUSVEG and inform growers on the Peak Industry Body's role, how it is funded and how it benefits industry.

This project used several research methods. These included a National LOTE Grower Forum workshop held in May 2008, seven LOTE case studies written in *Vegetables Australia* magazine and a LOTE database developed and utilised to communicate effectively with industry and LOTE growers, nationwide.

Surveys were also used, as LOTE growers were included in the Industry Needs Assessment survey conducted by Innovact Consulting in 2008. LOTE growers were also integrated into industry events through the Young Growers Tour to New Zealand and the Grower Tour to America, both in 2008.

Media strategies were also implemented with an Ethnic Media List developed and included with all media related issues that AUSVEG distributes to mainstream and rural media.

Industry publications were also utilised with LOTE growers and association profiles in *Vegetables Australia* magazine.

This project has found that LOTE growers appreciate the value of the LOTE project and its aims and objectives and are eager to participate and help the project to progress.

- In each state around Australia, LOTE growers have formed their own associations or community groups and have helped each other with translating industry R&D.
- When encouraged and helped with coordination, larger LOTE grower associations in each state have been willing to support smaller LOTE communities and groups in other parts of Australia. At the time of this report, no such group exists in the Northern Territory, however, there is interest in forming a group amongst growers in the outskirts of Darwin.
- Case studies on growers from certain areas in Australia have been profiled in *Vegetables Australia* magazine.
- Translation and a greater understanding by industry of the hardship and difficulties that LOTE growers face was an important issue raised by many growers.
- LOTE growers have great difficulty understanding labels on chemicals and pesticides. In some instances this has led to growers facing fines from the APVMA because they cannot read labels on chemicals.

Introduction

The Australian vegetable industry is highly diverse in the types of produce grown, geographic areas and grower demographics. Estimates of the total numbers of growers vary. However, the industry is aware of more than 6,000 growers across Australia. Furthermore, the “Vegetable Growers With A Language Other Than English Snapshot Report” identified 5,470 growers, 40 per cent of whom were LOTE growers.

Currently most produce is sold on the domestic market and consumer needs are rising and changing the way growers do business. Other challenges growers face include rising costs, increasing legislative burdens and cheap imports. Labour is also a major problem for the whole of industry. In particular LOTE growers have difficulties understanding political decisions of government surrounding seasonal labour, working visas, immigration restrictions and laws.

The vegetable industry tends to be state focussed with limited communication between growers within and across the states. Again, this problem is exacerbated with LOTE groups who tend to cluster geographically and stay within their own communities due to language and cultural barriers. Some communication across states does exist within language groups and this has been further developed and improved upon during the course of this project.

LOTE growers receive communication through a wide variety of channels that vary for each language group and geographic area. In the past, this communication has been ad hoc, mostly delivered in English and with little coordination between organisations or states. In most cases, the best form of communication is through existing trusted networks, including government and commercial agronomists and bilingual officers, chemical resellers and rural suppliers, grower associations and often by word of mouth.

Communication levels with these audiences are relatively low and therefore LOTE growers do not benefit to the extent that they should from R&D projects.

Whilst this project has worked on breaking down communication barriers, the need for further outreach programs is paramount to help with these areas of concern. Also allowing LOTE growers greater participation in the vegetable industry will ensure that all growers who pay the National Vegetable Levy benefit from R&D projects.

Methodology

LOTE project management committee

The LOTE project management committee was established to guide the objectives and tasks of the project. The committee met annually and liaised regularly to discuss the direction of the project.

First National LOTE Grower Forum held

The inaugural National LOTE Grower Forum in May 2008 aimed to build a network of LOTE growers nationally and provide a platform for growers to have a say collectively. The forum included participation from Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Cambodian growers, as well as researchers and representatives from HAL, AUSVEG and RIRDC. The notes from the meeting and list of participants are included, please refer to appendix 1.

Communication networks

The steering committee changed the term 'gatekeeper' to 'Key Communication Adviser' (KCA) in order to make it easier to approach potential representatives of each community. AUSVEG has built a rapport with members of the priority groups, and information regarding industry events is distributed to each KCA, IDO and the president of grower associations to circulate amongst members and other LOTE growers in the region.

A LOTE database has been established and has grown as the project progressed. The database includes growers, bilingual officers, industry development officers, agronomic consultants, service providers, outreach officers and other industry contacts that work with LOTE growers directly and indirectly.

The LOTE database has been incorporated into the National Vegetable Industry Database being coordinated by AUSVEG.

Case studies

In total, seven LOTE-related case studies have been featured in *Vegetables Australia* magazine. LOTE growers, who AUSVEG or IDOs have become aware of as not receiving publications such as *Vegetables Australia* and *Vegenotes*, have been added to the distribution list. Copies of each publication have also been mailed to Elders and Landmark in Darwin to further improve communication with LOTE growers. Both Elders and Landmark in Darwin have agreed to put the two publications on display, accessible to growers. Please refer to appendices three, four, five, six and seven for the LOTE case studies.

The KCAs have tested key messages and offered suggestions for what resources and communication channels best meet the needs of LOTE growers. These suggestions have been taken on board when implementing the strategy and also in developing the overarching National Vegetable Industry Communication Strategy, which will be implemented by AUSVEG commencing in July 2009.

The increase in communication is presenting more opportunities for industry representatives

to meet with LOTE growers and present information to them about the levy, R&D and resources available. AUSVEG presented to a number of Victoria's Vietnamese growers, and other presentations were made to small groups in SA, NSW, QLD and NT during 2008 and early 2009.

Established relationships

AUSVEG has built relationships with President Terry Ha and Vice-President Tony Har of the Chinese Growers Association of NSW. Stephen Ng has agreed to have resources available at Golden Harvest Farm Supplies. Once the new levy brochure is complete in conjunction with HAL, this brochure will be translated and copies will be distributed to Golden Harvest Supplies.

Relationships have been established and maintained with members of the Vietnamese groups in SA, QLD and NT. Through the LOTE forum, friendships have been built between members in SA and QLD of the Vietnamese community, and all contact details have been circulated between forum participants.

AUSVEG has contributed levy and R&D information to *National Marketplace News* and *Good Fruit and Vegetables*. Due to the fact that IDO project funding ceased in July 2009, AUSVEG's contribution to the *SA RIPE* newspaper, in conjunction with the SA IDO, is to be determined.

Ethnic Media List

An ethnic media list has been developed, including newspapers, television, radio, newsletters, and has grown since the beginning of the project. Using these lists, ethnic media are included on media distribution lists and written into the overarching Vegetable Industry Communication Strategy. This list is also used to promote industry events like the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards, direct growers to the AUSVEG website and promote R&D outcomes.

Industry participation

There has been increased participation of LOTE growers on industry study tours, ensuring growers know what tours are available to them and encouraging them to apply. Growers from a LOTE background attended both the 2008 VC-funded Young Growers tour to New Zealand and the 2008 Grower Tour to the US which included the PMA Summit. LOTE growers will also be encouraged to apply for this year's grower tours in July and October 2009.

There was LOTE grower attendance at the 2008 annual levy-payers meeting, which occurred in WA prior to the National LOTE Grower Forum. The trip to Perth also included field tours and the Vegetables WA 60th Anniversary Dinner and Australian Vegetable Industry Awards.

Industry Needs Assessment

A number of LOTE growers took part in the industry needs assessment interview process, both in the qualitative and quantitative research, with AUSVEG facilitating this. Industry development needs of LOTE growers have been taken into account in the recommendations

and report produced by Inovact Consulting.

Publications

Broader industry has responded well to Asian vegetables, LOTE growers and association profiles in *Vegetables Australia* magazine, and there is an opportunity to include similar material in other industry publications. The 'Eastern i' section of *Vegetables Australia* continues to be a successful addition to the magazine, highlighting the rapidly growing Asian vegetable industry.

Results

Awareness has been raised and an increased understanding of the vegetable industry structure, levy and responsibilities for LOTE growers has been communicated to groups and communities around Australia. This is evident through translated material into priority group languages which was sent to individuals and grower associations requesting LOTE grower input as part of HAL's 2009/10 Industry Call.

There has been increased LOTE grower participation in industry events such as the 2008 Australian Vegetable Industry Awards, the 2008 Annual Levy Payers Meeting and grower tours to New Zealand and America in 2008.

Greater appreciation and understanding has been fostered with LOTE growers in the broader vegetable industry and within AUSVEG. This has been achieved through the EnviroVeg program and case studies written in *Vegetables Australia* magazine.

A LOTE grower database with key contacts has been developed and continues to be updated. This database has also been incorporated into the National Vegetable Industry Database.

The inaugural National Grower Forum was held in Perth in May 2008. The forum allowed community leaders from LOTE grower communities and associations to network and discuss arising issues. The forum included participation from Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Cambodian growers, as well as researchers and representatives from HAL, AUSVEG and RIRDC. Refer to appendix one for notes and attendees at the forum.

Champions or leaders exist amongst grower groups and communities. Leaders convey information to their members, which worked effectively in grower workshops organised by AUSVEG. However, it is also important to note that this method of communication has created problems in the past. In some instances, leaders have conveyed incorrect information such as pesticide and chemical use to growers. This avenue of communication requires close monitoring and straightforward information in order for it to be effective.

Throughout the project AUSVEG has dealt and spoken with numerous LOTE growers around Australia. Grower reaction has been extremely positive, with any sort of information willingly accepted. This project has established that growers will actively participate in information sessions/meetings, as long as there is someone there they trust and that they can understand the information provided.

Discussion

This project has improved communication and collaboration with industry as well as improving information flow amongst non-English speaking growers. Implementation of this project in collaboration with the National Vegetable Communication Strategy relates directly to this goal.

The objectives set out for this project included forming a steering committee to guide the activities and tasks for the project. Due to changes in AUSVEG, the LOTE steering committee has somewhat changed over the past 18 months.

Changes to the steering committee included:

- Alan Davey, RIRDC Senior Research Manager replaced his predecessor John Oakeshott
- Richard Mulcahy, AUSVEG CEO replaced John Roach, former AUSVEG CEO
- Hugh Tobin, AUSVEG Communications Manager replaced Lisa Maguire, former AUSVEG General Manager/Director Communication
- Lucy Jarman AUSVEG Communications Officer replaced Project Officer Hannah Burns, former AUSVEG Communications Coordinator.

The objectives for this project were to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the vegetable industry structure, levy and responsibilities
- To increase and promote LOTE attendance and participation in industry events, such as grower tours and industry meetings
- Increase LOTE grower participation in industry events
- Educate government about horticulture's particularly high participation of LOTE growers and their diverse needs
- Foster greater appreciation and understanding of LOTE growers in the broader vegetable industry, including within AUSVEG

Recommendations are targeted at industry stakeholders, government, service providers, researchers, LOTE growers and parties dealing directly with LOTE growers.

The recommendations from this project are:

- LOTE growers need to be further exposed to the AUSVEG brand and there needs to be a greater understanding of the PIB's roles and responsibilities
- There needs to be an increased awareness of environmental, pesticide and chemical practices for LOTE growers and what their responsibilities are as a vegetable grower
- LOTE growers need to be better integrated into the mainstream vegetable industry

- Increased representation of LOTE growers on the vegetable IAC and other committees
- Communicating with LOTE growers can be done effectively through the use of industry champions or leaders in each community. This avenue is an ideal way to help break down communication barriers and convey information effectively
- LOTE growers are starting to understand the National Vegetable Levy. It would be useful for LOTE growers to work in collaboration with the LRS and provide growers with translated material about the levy
- It is recommended that AUSVEG recruit a LOTE Outreach Officer in their national headquarters to undertake a 12 month pilot program in two locations in Australia where large LOTE communities exist.

Technology Transfer

This project has looked at ways of enabling LOTE growers to access R&D projects and integrate them into the vegetable industry. It was also paramount that all issues, not just translation, were considered and incorporated into the strategy. This project looked at the underlying issues that were crucial when communicating R&D outcomes to non-English speaking vegetable growers.

This report is targeted at -

- AUSVEG and RIRDC
- Horticulture Australia Limited
- Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee
- Product Groups
- State agricultural bodies and associations

Grower Association Presidents and Chairs

- Chemical resellers and rural suppliers
- State Government employees including bilingual officers and agronomists
- Levy collectors
- Research extension staff
- Training providers

LOTE growers

- Leaders
- Growers
- LOTE workers and farm hands

Specific LOTE communities

- Chinese in the Sydney Basin
- Vietnamese in Sydney Basin, Darwin and Adelaide Plains
- Lebanese in the Sydney Basin
- Cambodian in Adelaide Plains

This project directly relates to industry due to the large number of LOTE growers (40 per cent) who make up the vegetable industry. The number of LOTE growers is increasing and therefore the language barrier needs to be addressed. The implications from this report for industry are that it could potentially slow down progression and industry development, with 40 per cent of growers not progressing or moving forward with their farming.

Due to the increasing number and nature of non- English speaking growers, policy makers need to consider the findings of this report and implement the recommendations into any future strategy decisions.

Government bodies are also implicated in this report with the APVMA and the need for LOTE growers to better understand pesticide and chemicals use, especially from a consumer point of view.

Recommendations

Recommendations to further develop the aims and objectives of this project are to continue integrating LOTE growers into the vegetable industry. It is important that LOTE growers feel a part of the broader industry. It is recommended that this be done through increased representation of LOTE growers in industry groups, for example the vegetable IAC and its sub committees.

LOTE growers need to be more familiar with the AUSVEG brand and understand the PIB's roles and responsibilities. The PIB represents all vegetable growers, and LOTE growers need to understand what avenues of R&D resources are available to them through AUSVEG. It is recommended that this avenue of promotion is continued.

During this project it became apparent that LOTE growers lacked awareness of what their responsibilities are as a vegetable grower. In many cases there was a lack of understanding, or incorrect implementation of proper environmental, pesticide and chemical practices. It is suggested that increased awareness of these issues are taken on board for any future HAL funded projects.

An excellent avenue for communicating with LOTE growers has been through community and cultural groups and associations. Communicating with growers in large areas has proven difficult in the past. This project found that an ideal way to solve this problem is through the use of industry champions or leaders of each community. This is an effective way to communicate with LOTE growers and it is recommended that future work continues to use these communication channels.

Whilst there has been some ground work in establishing links with the DAFF and LRS, it is recommended that this area of the vegetable industry is developed further. LOTE growers are starting to understand what the levy is, however it would be useful to work in collaboration with the LRS and provide growers with translated material about the National Vegetable Levy and what it is used for.

A major problem discovered when visiting growers around Australia is the need for further work on chemical and pesticide use. Growers do not understand the instructions on labels when using the chemicals on crops and have been issued with fines in the past for their misuse. Further research needs to be carried out on highlighting the importance of the APVMA, using chemicals and pesticides correctly and where growers can get more information on chemical labeling. It is also recommended that avenues for translated information on chemical and pesticide applications are explored, possibly in conjunction with chemical companies.

Another avenue of getting R&D communication out to growers is through chemical resellers like Elders and Landmark. It is recommended that translated information be provided in *Vegetables Australia* magazine and newsletters be made available for growers to access their local chemical reseller.

During the course of the project, when AUSVEG visited LOTE growers, it became apparent that growers generally do not trust authority figures. This is particularly important to note for any future research done by HAL, DAFF or the LRS.

AUSVEG is working towards implementing the LOTE communication strategy in the overarching National Vegetable Communication Strategy, ensuring that the progress made during this project continues post August 2009. It is recommended that the outcomes and recommendations of the Vegetable Industry Needs Assessment will be incorporated into future communication with LOTE growers.

For the first time, information was translated into the priority group languages and sent to individuals and grower associations requesting their input as part of HAL's 2009/10 Industry Call. As a result, LOTE growers had direct input into the R&D priorities for future levy-funded projects. It is recommended that this be continued annually, ensuring LOTE growers have a say in what areas R&D projects are funded by the National Vegetable Levy.

It is recommended that AUSVEG recruit a LOTE Outreach Officer in their national headquarters to undertake a 12 month pilot program in two locations in Australia where large LOTE communities exist.

The pilot program will be the subject of a separate proposal, but would encompass seminars and presentations in LOTE. Material would be distributed on a range of topics, ideally targeted at non-English speakers. This program would also engage LOTE leaders and encourage them to become industry champions to further enhance dialogue with AUSVEG and to better utilise the outcomes of R&D projects.

The pilot project would be the subject of a review to measure effectiveness towards the end of the project.

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- Horticulture Australia Limited
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- Hannah Burns, former AUSVEG Communications Coordinator
- Lisa Maguire, former AUSVEG General Manager
- Helena Whitman, former AUSVEG Environmental Manager
- Toni Davies, former AUSVEG Communications Manager
- Barry Lee, Connectica International
- Alison Anderson, New South Wales Industry Development Officer
- Melissa Fraser, South Australian Industry Development Officer
- Department of Primary Industries
- Northern Territory Horticultural Association
- Vegetable Industry State Associations
- Virginia Horticulture Centre

Abbreviations

LOTE – Language Other Than English

HAL – Horticulture Australia Limited

IDO – Industry Development Officer

DPI – Department of Primary Industries

RIRDC – Rural Industries Research and Development Committee

R&D – Research and Development

KCA – Key Communication Adviser

PIB – Peak Industry Body

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics

APVMA – Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

IAC – Industry Advisory Committee

DAFF- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Appendices

Appendix one:

Notes: National Grower Forum

Date/Time: 9.00am – 2.00pm

Saturday, 31 May 2008

Venue: Pagoda Broadwater Hotel, Perth

Attendees: Lisa Maguire, General Manager/Director Communications, AUSVEG
Hannah Burns, Communications Coordinator, AUSVEG
Lucy Keatinge, Industry Services Manager, HAL
Ross Ord, Industry Development Manager, AUSVEG
Helena Whitman, Environmental Manager, AUSVEG
Barry Lee, RIRDC representative
Don Pham, QLD cherry tomato and cucumber grower, President Vietnamese Farmers Association
Tommy Le, QLD cucumber grower, Vice-President Vietnamese Farmers Association QLD
Terry Ha, NSW Asian vegetable grower, President Chinese Growers Association NSW
Carol Soo, NSW grower
Tony Har, NSW Asian vegetable grower
Boran Huot, NSW cherry tomato grower, President Cambodian Growers Association NSW
Lanh Ngo, NSW cherry tomato grower, Vice-President Cambodian Growers Association NSW
Sen Thach, SA capsicum grower
Phuong Van Vo, SA eggplant and capsicum grower
Phan Van Le, SA hydro cucumber and truss tomato grower
Kim Nguyen, WA tomato and capsicum grower
Hoa Nguyen, WA tomato and capsicum grower
David Tran, WA sweet corn grower
Thang Le, WA cucumber grower, President Wanneroo Vietnamese Growers

Joe Elbustani, NSW tomato and cucumber grower, President NSW Greenhouse Growers Association

Jim Thomson, Editor *Vegetables Australia*, AUSVEG

Alison Anderson, Arris

Sandra McDougall, NSW DPI

Lucy Jarman, Secretariat

Agenda Items

9.00 – 9.15	Introduction – Why this forum?	
9.15 – 10.00	1. National Vegetable Levy R&D Program	Lucy Keatinge
	2. VegVision 2020	
	3. How the levy works and decision making – how to have your say	Ross Ord
	4. Who are your Vegetable IAC representatives?	

Ross Ord presented on the National Vegetable Levy investment, the decision making process and R&D funding cycle.

Don Pham asked Ross how the process works if for example a CSIRO representative is on an advisory group who is deciding whether or not they would support an application for funding submitted by CSIRO. Ross answered that any potential conflict of interest is resolved by the person leaving the room when the advisory group discusses that particular project.

Lucy Keatinge presented on the HAL structure, the strategic plan for the industry and how the advisory groups, IAC and R&D process fits into the overall strategic direction for the industry.

Don Pham asked Lucy why there is no levy on fresh tomatoes. Lucy replied that there are discussions happening at the moment regarding a fresh tomato levy.

Phuong Van Vo asked Lucy whether processed vegetables are levied and where that payment process takes place. Lucy explained that processed vegetables come under the National Vegetable Levy and the levy is collected at the first point of sale.

Don Pham asked how to apply for and obtain a minor use permit. Lucy suggested anyone wanting to find out more information about minor use permits should contact Peter Dal Santo.

Joe Elbustani expressed that he feels there are too many small projects being funded that don't address the bigger picture, and asked (for the benefit of other attendees) how the industry could have more of an input into what projects are being funded. Lucy explained that the process has changed because growers are now having input on the areas that require funding and then funds are allocated to projects to address these areas.

Ross Ord provided examples of priority forms after Lucy's presentation.

10.00 – 10.15	RIRDC Asian Foods Program	Barry Lee
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Barry began his presentation by asking if all growers in the meeting received *Vegetables Australia*

magazine and explained that the magazine is funded by the National Vegetable Levy. Growers in the room were aware that Vegetables Australia is funded by the levy.

Joe Elbustani asked Barry whether or not RIRDC is involved with the bumble bee industry. Barry responded to Joe's question by explaining that RIRDC is involved with the bumble bee industry.

Joe Elbustani questioned the coloured tomato and whether or not it is considered a new industry. Barry responded to Joe's question by explaining that coloured tomatoes are part of the tomato industry, therefore it's considered as an 'add on'. Lucy Keatinge also commented that coloured tomatoes are not a new industry, explaining to growers that any new variety of tomato is still part of the tomato industry.

Workshop – Session 1

10.15 – 10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview – what we are trying to achieve• Available communication tools (website, Annual Review, magazines)• <i>Break into groups</i>	Lisa Maguire Hannah Burns
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Lisa Maguire gave a short presentation of why everyone is here today and involved with the meeting. Lisa then arranged for everyone in the room to form workshop groups.

10.30 – 10.45 Morning Tea

Workshop – Session 2: R&D issues and needs

10.45 – 11.45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Past R&D – recall exercise (15 mins)• R&D needs today (30 mins)• R&D needs – groups present back (15 mins)	Lisa Maguire
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Helena's Group

Past R&D

- DBM management
- Minor use permits
- Bunchline (shallots) disease management
- Looked at R&D and how it was used when growers first started growing. There are problems accessing this information, growers who could access information don't know where to access it.

R&D needs today

- Chemical issues were a main issue with softer chemicals that are environmentally sensitive. Shorter with-holding periods, consistency with state regulations, growers have problems with trade name confusion – some growers might know the active constituents, rather than just the actual trade name
 - Communication and realistically translating information doesn't necessarily work as some growers cannot read. It was suggested that it would be better to have DVDs and workshops. Very keen on workshops.
 - Growers suggested having information available on the AUSVEG website, e.g. a list of available people who can come out and give bilingual presentations
-

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- Market research – keeping up-to-date with consumer needs
 - Labour – improved mechanisation in strawberries and vegetables. Getting seasonal labour like in New Zealand. Lower level of English is ok as you could match with farm owners.
 - Uptake of new technology (information/training)
 - Bilingual officers
 - Demonstration of recommended practices to gain confidence (demonstration farms)
 - Bird control on farms (friendly)
 - Understanding growers don't participate in associations and industry activities and enhance industry involvement
 - Nematode issues
 - Off-label use of minor chemicals (egg plant)

Ross' Group

Past R&D

- Staff in industry
- WFT extension
- IDO's
- Clubroot
- Cucumber disease
- Strawberry crown rot
- LOTE communications project
- Surveys
- Recognised IDOs as levy funded

R&D needs today

- Nematode issue – WA using methylbromide (chemical)
- Water rights- problems with government allocations. Growers are currently using water from rivers, which will eventually be restricted by government. Growers need a better understanding on water rights and allocations.
- Better communication with chemicals in regards to safety. This is an issue with chemical safety for both growers and public community
- Off label use of minor chemicals – egg plant
- Marketing ideas e.g. grower markets/internet market
- Tomato levy
- Continuity of IPM extension programs
- Business training – growers know about production but not business e.g. budgeting
- Communication in other languages
- Continuity of staff within industry (communication, information gets lost at the end of every project)
- Grub (Heliothis) control sweet corn (covered in eastern states, WA?)
- Availability of information from past projects – growers need easy access and know where to go to get it.
- Information on cucumber disease management – what are the outcomes of past projects
- More Asian vegetable pest and disease management and communication

Alison's Group

Past R&D

-
- R&D recall very good – covering pest and disease management
 - LOTE project is levy funded
 - IDOs
 - Minor use work
 - Bumblebees
 - Greenhouse media, pest, disease projects
 - Magazine
 - Asian vegetable pest and disease projects

R&D needs today

- Ideas centred on communication and learning more about outcomes. When projects finish there are problems with growers knowing how to access project information. Growers need to be aware of where they can access research that was done in the past.
- Bilingual officers would be more helpful than having information in other languages
- Labour was an issue, growers would like overseas labour matching groups e.g. Chinese labour with Chinese growers
- Demonstration farms
- More of an understanding of why growers don't associate with industry associations
- Keeping up to date with consumers
- More trade and technology
- All mainly to do with communication based needs
- National communication of projects – not just in the region where the research was conducted
- Water and fertiliser management (hydroponics and field)
- Improved understanding of how to get to use NFT in hydroponics. Good hydroponics management and training
- Access through community associations
- Need bilingual IDOs (national)
- Coordinator
- Gate keeper
- Information source
- Chemicals – softer chemicals, shorter with holding periods
- Consistency across states with chemicals
- Trade name Vs active ingredient
- Water rights and water allocation issues, including government
- Methylbromide testing etc to use with confidence for treatment of nematodes. Growers worried it is to be banned. What are some alternatives?
- Better communication of chemicals so they can be used safely. There is a lack of understanding from growers.

Workshop – Session 3: Getting the information

11.45 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What communication has worked and how could it be improved? How can we encourage greater participation in broader industry? (20 mins) • Presentation back to groups (10 mins) • Responsibilities of the LOTE network and how to increase network and encourage participation in the vegetable industry (15 mins) 	Lisa Maguire
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Helena

What communication has worked?

- Vegetables Australia magazine
- IDOs
- Continuity of staff (management people, researchers etc)

How can it be improved?

- Linking growers between regions/states/overseas
- Formation of marketing groups
- Improving linkages between regional groups and state bodies with incentives to join in the first or second year
- Growers don't know about member benefits
- Affiliations between small associations and state grower associations
- Improving linkages between based associations and others
- Leadership programs
- The missing gap between both groups is a bilingual officer, this is the biggest problem facing growers

Encouraging greater participation in broader industry?

- Group spoke about encouraging more growers from each community to come to the national conference, if the information was there it could be relayed through a chain about certain events. Growers would be interested in attending the conference, however there is a problem with getting the information out to growers about such events
- Discussed the need for people who attended today's meeting to encourage others to attend such meetings in the future

Alison

What communication has worked?

- WA grower magazine – however not everyone receives it
- Training/workshops
- Formal education
- Communication works for each individual – magazine, IDO, continuous staff works well

How can it be improved?

- Not many growers use the internet
- Formalised information flow to associations
- Access to information
- Simple visual information – DVD
- Access to researchers/facilitators/training/IDO
- Translation of chemical labels for safety of growers and the public
- Education of chemical labels for safety of both growers and public
- More on farm activities
- Tours – young and experienced both national and international
- The internet is a problem for some growers, as they might not have internet access
- Discussed having bilingual officers
- Industry needs better information about permits and getting information out to growers, some growers aren't getting information from their IDO
- Need to have a formalised system in place of getting information from HAL and AUSVEG to growers/associations so information can get out to grower meetings. At present growers/associations cannot get information out to growers without these meetings.

Encouraging greater participation in broader industry?

-
- More activities on-farm and even within one community in different locations so growers can get to these information nights
 - Importance of each group working together
 - Linking groups with incentives would promote benefits of being members
 - Having formal agreements in place for groups

Ross

What communication has worked?

- Newsletters
- Growers don't use internet/email not a good idea for communication

How can it be improved?

- Flyers and industry magazines – English and local language which could be distributed through local groups
- Follow up with group meetings (possibly Friday meetings) with IDOs and an interpreter
- Local community groups and associations need to be extended and maintained
- Community radio could have potential e.g. Saturday segment
- Rural suppliers to be better informed about permits and giving growers up to date information
- Bilingual officers
- Growers informing industry (IDOs) of email addresses
- Discussed issues on community groups and the need to maintain groups. Issues of what happens from now and in 12 months in the future. If there is no follow up/no funding all this effort and work falls apart
- The need to have an interpreter present, if growers don't understand half of the information at a meeting, then its good to have an interpreter present at each meeting to follow up and explain to growers after. There is no point in growers understanding half of the information in a meeting.
- Problems with first generation growers as email and web are not practical and don't get used. It's a good idea for second and third generation, but a waste of time for first generation growers.

Encouraging greater participation in broader industry?

- Kim Nguyen said she is here today to get the information from this meeting and convey it back to her community
- Discussed having a community radio session on SBS. Suggested a local community group to have a session and talk about what is going on in industry

1.30 – 2.00	Enviroveg Program – what is it? How do I get involved?	Helena Whitman
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Helena began her presentation by explaining that it is free for all levy paying growers to become a member of Enviroveg. Helena then went on to explain that the Enviroveg book is a self assessment tool that provides information through a manual, on new laws or regulations.

In most states in Australia, growers have to have an environmental plan, if they are to make any changes to their properties. Helena explained to growers that this environmental plan or action plan isn't complicated. Growers just need to outline areas of their business/property that they are going to fix or work on in the future.

Helena also discussed with growers how it is a good idea to send their Enviroveg certificate to their local council. This lets local council know that growers are being environmentally responsible.

Helena discussed how waste management is a big issue for industry, and some ideas were mentioned on how waste can be reduced. Also, saving energy can be done by maintaining equipment and machinery and

by also keeping chemical sheds/holding areas clean and well maintained.

It was mentioned that new information for hydroponic and greenhouse growers will be made available soon by Enviroveg. Helena also talked about running future workshops, however she needs more funding. Helena would also like to run workshops in LOTE grower communities.

Joe Elbustani discussed how the environment is a responsibility for everyone, but how it is expensive to be environmentally friendly compared to what returns growers receive for the effort. There needs to be a system in place with council, to work with growers and the community. Joe also talked about problems in dealing with local councils, as some materials could be recycled by the council and community, instead it goes to waste.

Additional: A Healthy Soils UTE guide and DVD are available to all Enviroveg members.

Action - Hannah to circulate a list of contact details to every grower

Finished at approx 2.30pm

End

Appendix two:

Moustafa Osman – Case study

Moustafa, 28, and his three brothers grow mini cucumbers, known as qukes, for major supermarket supplier Perfection Fresh Australia. The vegetables are grown in a greenhouse on a two-hectare block at Rossmore, about 40 kilometres west of Sydney.

Moustafa first became interested in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies and biological controls at a grower's meeting about four years ago. The popular view among growers at the time was that such measure were only suited to hi-tech greenhouses. But Moustafa was convinced from the beginning that they could offer major benefits in the many low to medium-tech greenhouses such as the one his family operated.

His increasing involvement with Perfection Fresh and the company's demanding quality assurance standards was also making Moustafa well aware of the need for a pest management program that offered minimum use of chemicals and allowed him to trace and address the source of pest problems. So when a NSW Department of Primary Industries team approached Moustafa in December 2004 and invited him to become involved in an IPM development program, he eagerly accepted.

The program is part of a project aimed at helping Sydney growers identify pest problems and implement IPM. The project is led by Dr Stephen Goodwin, Senior Research Scientist for NSW DPI at Gosford Horticultural Institute and involves several NSW DPI research specialists.

Vegetable IPM Project Officer, Stacey Azzopardi, who is based at Richmond, first helped Moustafa organise a survey of his greenhouse which found that western flower thrips were a major pest problem. Lack of registrations and withholding period restraints, meant they could not be controlled chemically and up to 30 percent of the fruit was being damaged as a result.

With Stacey's help, Moustafa introduced a farm hygiene program, controlling weeds in a five metre buffer around the greenhouse and removing old crop waste from the area. "We also put down weed mat and lifted the bags off the ground," Moustafa said. They also set up sticky traps to monitor the

thrips. The results were dramatic. “Within a few weeks the thrips numbers were down by 50 percent and in two months they were down to an acceptable level,” Moustafa said.

Moustafa also obtained a permit for Spinosad with a one-day withholding period to allow him a chemical option should thrips numbers increase. However, ongoing good farm hygiene has kept numbers down with weekly scouting revealing minimal thrips.

Crops are now being managed using biological control agents and targeted spraying of soft chemicals where necessary. No fruit has been discarded this year due to thrips damage.

Stacey and her team have showcased the results achieved by Moustafa to other Sydney Basin growers during a series of farm walks which began in February 2005. Almost 100 growers turned out for one such walk in June 2006 to review the progress of the previous 12 months.

Moustafa said that the IPM project has also provided many indirect benefits. “We now find it much easier to meet the quality assurance and traceability requirements of Perfection Fresh,” he said. “Because we are monitoring disease and pests it is easier to trace the source of any problems and deal with them.”

Moustafa said the changes have also increased the reputation of his operation. “Whenever we put any produce through the markets it is now among the first sold,” he said.

With fewer frustrations and better organisation, Moustafa has more time for other things such as developing his business. He is working with brothers, Mohamad, Bachir and Zahir, on plans to expand the marketing and production arms of the operation.

Moustafa and his brothers are also undertaking work to improve the ventilation system of the greenhouse for better control over humidity levels. This, he said, will enable more effective control of white fly pests and fungal disease threats in the greenhouse.

Despite the plans and the IPM success, Moustafa says the greenhouse will never become a fully computerised, hi-tech operation. He said the family has maintained a special relationship with the vegetables they grow since his father, Osman Osman, moved from Lebanon and took up the block at Rossmore in 1991.

“We watch the qukes 24/7 and we can tell immediately when they are not getting the care they need,” he said. “We treat them like babies.” Moustafa believes that this care is reflected in the quality of the produce and cannot be matched by fully computerised operations.

Moustafa said many growers with low to medium tech greenhouses still think that IPM and biological pest control is beyond them or “just too hard”. He concedes that there is a lot of work involved in the initial steps to establish good farm hygiene and an effective pest monitoring system but the benefits that flow from IPM after you get over the hump more than repay the effort. All growers need to see that IPM is just another step towards truly organic farming and the way of the future for the industry.

Appendix three: Joe Elbustani – case study

Language no longer the great divide

Growers who speak a language other than English are making the most of translating services and bilingual officers to access the latest industry information.

Reflecting Australia's reputation for being a multicultural melting pot, a study released in October 2005 reported that 39 per cent of Australian vegetable growers speak a language other than English (LOTE). The study, commissioned by AUSVEG and HAL, found that while the prevalence of foreign cultures, cuisines and agricultural practices helped diversify and strengthen the nation's vegetable industry, communication between growers, associations and government departments was often difficult.

Working in a multicultural industry ensures that no single factor will improve communication, especially given the diversity in language, culture, religion, literacy levels, business ownership and growers' support networks. However, it is important to remember that LOTE growers are not defined by the language that they speak, said Virginia Brunton, Resource Development Officer, Gosford Horticultural Institute, NSW DPI.

"Generally they are farmers first; they have the same needs as other farmers and we meet these needs by providing services in a language they can understand," she said.

Services rendered

According to the study, 81 per cent of growers in New South Wales speak a language other than English. Nationalities include Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Yugoslavian/Serbian and Korean, not to mention the Maltese and Italian growers who migrated decades ago and now predominantly speak English.

Information most sought by growers relates to chemical responsibility and use, technical and practical information, and efficient vegetable production. Yet, with a grower-base as varied as NSW's, how can this best be communicated?

Language services for LOTE growers must be broad, varied, and often include one-on-one contact. In 2005, NSW DPI appointed three bilingual officers to work with Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian growers in the Sydney Basin. The project also provided follow-up services for the mandatory training undertaken by those who use agriculture chemicals, along with information about efficient water use, sustainable agriculture, business management and food safety.

While it's possible that language difficulties experienced by LOTE growers could restrict their business opportunities, Virginia said that there was little direct evidence of this.

"However, they may not always receive completely satisfactory feedback about product quality and prices. Information provided can be out of date or confusing, such as permitted chemicals or record-keeping requirements. These issues are not confined to LOTE growers," Virginia said.

Joe Elbustani, cucumber and tomato grower and President of the New South Wales Greenhouse Association, agrees that LOTE growers and non-LOTE growers share similar difficulties.

"Non-English speakers can often get information they need through the people they've employed, or their wives or husbands. The major problem is the missing link between the information regulation and the industry," said Joe.

Of course, the Sydney Basin isn't the only region with a high proportion of LOTE growers. The Adelaide Plains area has about 350 Vietnamese and Cambodian growers.

As a registered training organisation, the Virginia Horticulture Centre offers translators for all its courses; it also works with other training providers, such as ChemCert, to ensure translators are available.

“We have all Freshcare manuals and training information translated into Vietnamese, Khmer (Cambodian), Punjabi, Chinese and Arabic for growers. Our administration coordinator is Vietnamese and she frequently fields inquiries and calls from our Vietnamese growers. She also joins other VHC staff members on-farm to assist with translation,” said Victoria Richardson, Group Operations Manager Post Harvest at VHC.

The VHC recently organised a basic hydroponics course for Vietnamese growers. “The course enabled growers to change from soil to hydro, many of whom would otherwise not have had the opportunity or capacity to achieve this,” said Victoria.

Is language the issue?

Since relocating from Lebanon, Joe has lived in Australia for 15 years. While he was not directly involved in agriculture in his home country, he came from a growing region. His story is not dissimilar to many other LOTE growers, and although English is his third language he'd be hard-pressed to call himself a LOTE grower. As he sees it, his concerns are shared by the majority of his colleagues, regardless of their English skills.

“The problem of language is a matter of a year or two for newcomers. One way or another, they are managing. When I first came to Australia, I enrolled in English courses before I did anything else. There was lots of help from the government at the time, it was a priority. The courses were a lot easier to access than they are now,” he said.

By accident or design, there are 400 Lebanese growers in NSW, most of them in the Sydney basin. The NSW Greenhouse Association represents 200 growers, many of whom are Lebanese. While Joe is now fluent in English, what about association members whose English isn't as strong?

“We do as much as we can to help them, but we have limited resources. We can't afford to employ somebody,” he said.

David Chung, President of the Australian Chinese Growers Association of NSW, said that LOTE growers may face difficulties sourcing information, especially in regards to chemical use and record keeping. When it comes to helping association members he said it depends on the assistance they're after. “I've helped with taxation, water issues, chemical training, and I liaise with market authorities on behalf of some growers.”

David began farming in Australia in 1972, while he started with spinach, beetroot and lettuce, he now farms Asian green-leaf vegetables. He's proud of how quickly Australia's Asian vegetables market has grown—from almost nothing 20 years ago to nearly \$160 million per annum.

Band together

While one could assume that LOTE growers form close working relationships with growers who speak their language, there's another connection that is even stronger.

“Growers often work across language groups; they prefer to be associated with their product. For example, I have a group of hydroponics farmers meeting weekly that has members from all the ethnic groups farming in Sydney,” said Virginia.

The 2005 survey found that LOTE growers generally own or operate farms that are between one half and two hectares in size. Joe believes that growers feel solidarity against the larger corporate farms, which may be one reason why they work together.

“Multimillion dollar companies can afford to lose money for 10 years while a small family business can't afford to lose for one year. Market access is becoming really hard for the small growers,” he said.

Networking is crucial at this juncture, said Victoria. “The strong sense of community and networks among the Vietnamese and Cambodian growers create good business opportunities—particularly across state borders. Many of our growers deal with the eastern seaboard markets rather than Adelaide as a direct result of their own networks,” she said.

“While some communicate solely with their own group there are those who are conversant with ‘Europeans’—some as a direct need, others by choice. Growers often visit the centre and request to speak with Tina, our administration coordinator, whereas others are happy to speak to anyone. Quite often the level of interaction is related to the confidence level in spoken English or the complexity of the issue at hand.”

When growers do band together, it's inevitable that they start to look outwards. An advantage of being a LOTE grower is the potential for exporting product, and it's something that Joe has his eye on in the future.

“The potential is great. Transport is becoming a lot quicker and for the freshest vegetables to be on anybody's table in no time, in-season vegetables can be imported to other countries,” he said.

Appendix four: Michael Lee – Case study

Language barrier a cause for concern

Western Australia isn't just home to a mining boom. Business is booming for grower and exporter Michael Le, who's gone in to bat for LOTE growers.

Michael Le left school at the age of 15 to join his family's horticultural business in Western Australia. Some might see this as his first big mistake, as the road to success is said to be through advanced

education, but for Mike it paid dividends. He and his brothers now run a successful vegetable export/wholesale business as well as a real estate and construction business in Western Australia and south-east Asia. The horticultural arm of their business is called TLF (Thang Le Family) Exports Company—the only large non-leafline, carrot and fruit producing grower/exporter in Western Australia.

TLF grows, packs and markets tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and capsicums through Australian and Asian chains, and they are increasing their local focus through Australia's wholesale markets. The company comprises about 60 share-farming groups, most of whom are Asian and many of whom are refugees. Thang Le brought his family to Australia in 1982 from South Vietnam so his children could receive a good education. "We got a lot of help in the beginning," said Michael, his son. "It's only fair we pass it on to others."

Michael condemns the lack of government and community assistance to growers who speak a language other than English (LOTE), and the government's reluctance to provide non-skilled working visas. "Our farm is multicultural," he said. "My brothers and I speak fluent English and Vietnamese, so we take responsibility for all TLF's infrastructure. The share-farmers do all the labouring and get 50 per cent of the net sales."

Michael knows the horticultural industry well. He is a member of several committees, including the VegetablesWA Committee, the pre-Melbourne Tomato Committee, and the Protected Cropping Working Group, which reports to the Production Advisory Group of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). Earlier this month he also attended the IAC meetings as part of the Market Development Advisory Group.

Level the playing field

"Industry and government have to face up to some very challenging issues," he said. "There are not enough workers and those we have often cannot speak English. Without workers and water our industry can't survive. The government only wants to bring in skilled workers, but some growers are leaving crops in the ground because of a lack of labour. The Immigration Minister should seriously look at this issue and think about making it easier to work in Australia under a non-skill working visa. We train all the workers here at TLF but still cannot get enough."

Most of TLF's share-farmers do not have strong English, said Michael. "Many have difficulty understanding the instructions and labelling of the chemicals and fertilisers. I went back to school and got a degree in chemistry, so that I could understand these things better, but there is almost no outside help given to farm workers."

He argues that LOTE growers do not have easy access to the latest research or technology, and that government assistance is mostly limited to the translation of a few pamphlets from the Department of Agriculture. "I spend a lot of time translating. It slows down work but you have to do it. It's for safety reasons as well as helping people do their job correctly," he said.

"Australia is classed as having the best and safest quality of produce, and I assure you that every large farm has non-English speaking people working there. What has anyone done to assist with this? For

water restrictions and global warming, there are no translations or representatives available to explain or supply data to these people.”

Water-wise isn't enough

Michael's family started out near Geraldton, 420 kilometres north of Perth. Water issues moved them further south to Carabooda in the Wanneroo region, but the water-wars followed them. Wanneroo is considered one of the most rapidly developing urban areas in Australia and the water supply cannot keep pace.

“At the moment we are borderline, but [if we grow] any bigger and we'll have serious water problems. I'd use recycled water if we had access to those facilities, but we don't,” said Michael. “The Water and Rivers Commission limits supplies to growers like us, but what if all growers one day pull the pin because there's not enough water access? What would we eat then? Imported fruit and vegetables?”

Michael, whose main role at TLF is marketing management, is an interesting mix of the hard-edged businessman and an individual who respects people and the forces of nature.

From a starting base of three workers ten years ago, TLF now comprises more than 350 workers. One share-farmer plot is between 5 to 10 acres, each plot growing from 10,000 to 80,000 plants per year. In one year, TLF plants about 3 million tomato plants, eight acres of capsicums under plastic tunnels, 650 thousand Brussels sprouts plants, 70 acres of broccoli, and 20 acres of cherry tomatoes—in all, about 360 acres.

“We've expanded our storage in the past few years,” said Michael. “Cool rooms now hold about 1,000 pallets and our packing facility is under climate control, totalling an area of about 5,000 square metres.” However, there are plans to further increase the business's expansion. “Of course, we are aiming for higher yields,” he said.

Appendix five: Cambodian and Khmer Krom Horticultural Association – Case study

Beyond the call of duty

With the aim of improving the well-being of grower families, CAKHA takes the concept of community support incredibly seriously.

A horticultural association formed less than a year ago to assist Cambodian and Khmer Krom grower families in South Australia is already achieving worthwhile results for its members. The Cambodian and Khmer Krom Horticultural Association (CAKHA) has met regularly in Adelaide since adopting its constitution on 1 July last year.

CAKHA Executive Director, Oukla Thach, said more than 80 grower families had already joined the association and this number was expected to soon reach 100. More than 60 per cent of the existing membership comprises Khmer Krom growers and their families; Cambodian families make up the remainder. The Khmer Krom are from an area in southern Vietnam, near the Cambodian border. They share a common language, ancestry, and Buddhist religious beliefs with Cambodians.

Oukla said CAKHA assists increasing numbers of immigrant families from urban areas in Adelaide, Sydney, and from Cambodia, to establish vegetable farms and glasshouse operations in South Australia's Virginia area.

“The aim of the association is to improve the well-being of the grower families,” he said. “One way we achieve this is to identify land suitable for grower needs and help growers organise groups to buy the land.”

Oukla said grower groups organised by CAKHA had already bought more than 200 acres of land. He estimates that Cambodian and Khmer Krom families now farm more than 400 acres in the Virginia area.

A host of benefits

CAKHA also helps improve the management and business skills of its growers by organising seminars and courses that cover a range of issues, including pest management, risk and crisis management and fertiliser application.

“We arrange for horticulture industry and SARDI (South Australian Research and Development Institute) experts to address growers and we sponsor visits by business leaders from Cambodia who advise our members,” said Oukla.

“We are organising a program to assist with the translation of chemical and fertiliser labels for growers, which will promote better understanding and safer use of chemicals. We also plan to publish LOTE (Language Other Than English) newsletters and periodicals to assist growers. The association is building these links with the support of the Virginia Horticulture Centre and its local facilities to assist meetings, strategic planning and communications.”

The social benefits of CAKHA are also important. “Our meetings provide a focus for friendship between the grower families and a basis for interaction and friendship with other South Australian grower communities,” said Oukla. “The association organises education programs to assist families to deal with the social problems faced by young people such as drugs and unemployment.”

On 13 April, CAKHA members held their biggest ever social gathering to celebrate the Buddhist New Year. The festivities took place on a vegetable farm owned by one of the members on the outskirts of Adelaide and were attended by more than 100 families. With more Cambodian and Khmer Krom families settling in South Australia, Oukla expects a substantial increase in CAKHA membership in coming years.

Appendix six: In-field education is a stand-out success – Case study

A series of trials west of Sydney is helping Cambodian growers in Australia to improve production and post-harvest techniques.

For the past three years, a team from New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has been working with a number of Cambodian growers in a program designed to improve the sharing of technology and knowledge between Australia and Cambodia.

The project, which is funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), started in 2006 and is a DPI project loosely based on the Farmer Field School technique used in many developing countries.

The scheme, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation attached to the UN, encourages growers to improve their farming techniques in the field rather than in the classroom.

Project leader Mark Hickey said that the NSW DPI program followed the principles of the Farmer Field School, but was more relaxed in its reporting structure—adapted to suit the competing demands of participating growers.

Field forum

The growers involved meet roughly every three weeks during the three-month growing cycle, enabling the group to learn in their crops rather than in a classroom or growing shed. DPI technical specialists including entomologists, pathologists and irrigation officers are invited to join the field schools, and answer questions. Seed company representatives also participated.

Mark said the project provided a forum for growers to get together and share information among themselves.

“It works much better in many ways than having someone from the DPI come and lecture to them. It is better to have a grower explain best practice, where the crop or field is the classroom,” he said.

“It enables them to see exactly where a crop is during the growing cycle and what pests and diseases it may have attracted. They can see whether the crop is flowering or fruiting so that when they go back to their own farm they can look at their crops and adapt any learnings.”

Grower Sunly Sao volunteered his property at Cecil Park, 40 km from Sydney, for the field trials and workshops, which involved tomato crops.

He said there were 64 Cambodian growers in the area who were very keen to expand their horticulture knowledge and learn about more efficient growing techniques.

Sunly said the workshops had shown growers many different farming techniques and different varieties of cherry tomatoes. As a result they have now extended their growing season deep into winter; in the past, May was the end of the season.

Global reach

Mark, who lived in Cambodia for four years, has been working closely with partner organisations in Cambodia including the Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and Department of Agronomy and Agricultural Land Improvement (DAALI). Plant breeders from the AVRDC World Vegetable Centre in Taiwan are also part of the project.

Founded in 1971, the AVRDC World Vegetable Centre has a mandate to enhance vegetable production in the Asian tropics, and has a global role in promoting and supporting vegetable research and development in Africa, Asia, and other regions of the world.

The results so far have included new varieties of AVRDC tomatoes released for commercial trials and the establishment of a post-harvest horticulture laboratory at CARDI.

Compare and contrast

In Australia, a key component of the work has been to conduct a series of varietal evaluations and post-harvest research with cherry tomatoes.

Mark said that while cherry tomatoes were a hardy crop, it was imperative they had the right look and colour.

“They can’t have any blemishes, they have to be the right shade of red and they need to be the right shape,” he said.

All but one of the crops studied were outdoor crops. The one greenhouse crop used a hydroponic system. Mark said the aim of the greenhouse crop was not to convert growers to a hydroponic system, but to help them compare the positives and negatives of the two crop-types.

One of the most noticeable differences was that greenhouse fruit was bigger, which can be a negative when growing cherry tomatoes. Mark added that as far as taste was concerned, a consumer survey revealed that the field tomatoes were almost universally sweeter.

On the other side of the equation, the yield from field tomatoes was 40 to 50 per cent less than from the greenhouse.

The project’s success was partly due to the involvement of participating seed companies. “The companies made their latest material available for the trials, and this allowed the growers to see a range of varieties grown on the same farm, under the same conditions. They could then draw their own conclusions,” said Mark.

The Australian component of the project is winding up, with a two more grower meetings planned. The project will then move on to Cambodia so as to put into place the lessons learned.

The bottom line:

- Cambodian growers in NSW have been working together to learn more about improved growing practices relating to tomato crops.
- The 64 members of the group met once every three weeks during the three-month growing cycle to compare varieties, and field and greenhouse crops.
- This method of learning provided a forum for growers and allowed them to immediately put into action their findings from the workshops.

Appendix seven: Logan Shire case study

“Not in my backyard”

The urbanisation of rural areas can make life difficult for growers, especially if residents and local councils don't understand how regulated the horticulture industry is.

From wind-farms in Victoria's Gippsland, to late-night music venues in inner-suburban Sydney, “not in my backyard” is an increasingly common reaction from residents on all manner of issues; they appreciate the necessity of a service, they just don't want it to have a direct impact on their lives.

With the urbanisation of rural areas nationally, growers have found themselves on the receiving end of this mentality. While growers' property values in Baldivis, Western Australia, and Cranbourne, Victoria, for example, have increased with rezoning, what happens when they have no plans to relocate?

Teething problems

Lisa Crooks owns two properties in Chambers Flat with her husband Ray, growing parsley and radishes. Located less than one hour south of Brisbane, the farm has been operating complaint-free for 18 years, but the past few years have proved difficult with confusion over changing legislation for agricultural businesses and local councils that have inconsistent views of the value of market gardens. Until March this year, Lisa's properties were part of Beaudesert Shire. They are now part of Logan City.

The problems stem from complaints made by residents, said Lisa. She first heard about these complaints by reading the local paper.

“In the early days, concerns from residents were about land clearing. This changed to concerns about chemical usage, dust and pollution before moving on to greenhouse visual amenities—the sight of greenhouses in the landscape,” she said.

“Neighbours, and not necessarily those who were new to the area, voiced their concerns directly to our local council. As many complaints related to LOTE growers, those who speak a language other than English, there were language issues in some instances.”

Lisa had some concerns of her own. “If growers keep working, silently riding out the issues in the hope that they will disappear, it could be detrimental to the industry as a whole,” she said.

Don Pham, a cucumber greenhouse grower in Logan City, is President of the Vietnamese Growers Association, which represent 52 growers. He appreciates that residents’ concerns should be investigated, but believes that many of these concerns stem from residents not knowing a great deal about the highly-regulated horticulture industry.

“There were concerns about the odours that surround chemical application. Agricultural chemicals, like petrol, have an odour. This is normal. When agricultural chemicals are applied correctly, this odour is not dangerous,” said Don.

While Workplace Health and Safety representatives understand that these chemicals, when correctly applied, hold no risk to residents’ health, the trouble Don has is in communicating this to residents, especially when many growers in the area are LOTE growers.

Rob Fontebasso, a sales representative for Elders, has had many dealing with growers and residents in the shire, with some residents contacting him directly to air their concerns. He said that teething problems commonly occur when rural areas are urbanised.

Taskforce time

In light of these complaints, in January 2007 Beaudesert Shire Council announced its intention to establish the Intensive Horticulture Taskforce.

Along with representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Environmental Protection Agency, Queensland Health, Queensland Police Service, Growcom and the Logan Albert Catchment Association, Lisa and Don joined the taskforce, which had its first meeting in June 2007. Involvement in the taskforce gave them the opportunity to converse with council representatives directly.

“Initially, one of the councilors on the taskforce wanted to regulate the entire horticulture industry. Luckily, representatives from EPA and Workplace Health and Safety explained how regulated the industry already is,” said Lisa.

The taskforce met until December last year. “A decision was made for growers to communicate more with the council and increase compliance within the industry. This included educating the community about best farming practices, and bringing growers in line with taskforce recommendations,” said Lisa.

“The taskforce welcomed this. An information booklet was produced detailing how growers could be compliant with council. Growcom supplied a lot of the data, which the council supplemented with its own information. This sheet was distributed to every grower.”

For Don, the taskforce enabled him to clarify what occurrences had led to complaints from residents, which he communicated to members of his association.

“Good results came out of the taskforce. We rectified some things on our side, for example, sometimes when the soil is too dry, tractors create dust. Our members now hold off using tractors until the soil is wet enough or there is no wind to blow the dust onto neighbouring properties,” he said.

A spokeswoman for Logan City Council said that the taskforce made good progress.

“Since the completion of taskforce activities ... community concerns about intensive horticulture operations have reduced. City Standards have advised earlier this year that: ‘the introduction of outcomes from the Intensive Agriculture Taskforce have coincided with decreased nuisance complaints as a result of market gardening practices. In the last six months there have been three manure odour complaints and two smoke nuisance complaints associated with intensive agriculture; however, breaches were not detected in most of those instances” she said.

Change for the better

With the taskforce successful, growers in the shire had greater confidence that their businesses were better understood by the council. To cement this, further initiatives were made to improve growing practices.

In February 2008, a Growing Wiser workshop for growers was held. Representatives from Workplace Health and Safety, Queensland DPI&F, Drummaster, Beaudesert Shire Council, Elders and Water For Profit all presented.

“Attendance was voluntary but of the 37 growers invited, 34 growers attended. These were large growers, accounting for the majority of greenhouse production in the shire. The evening lasted for about three hours and was hosted by the then Queensland Vegetable IDO Simon Powell,” said Lisa.

“The shire’s compliance officer was impressed by the night, which had a positive spin off. We now talk more openly to the council and agreed that if there were any more problems that they would be communicated to us, so the industry can address them as a whole.”

Don used the quarterly General Meetings of the Vietnamese Growers Association to communicate growers’ obligations.

“At one of these meetings, all members agreed that it was our responsibility to change how we farmed, in order to accommodate our neighbours. We asked the council to let our neighbours know that we were doing something to meet their concerns,” he said.

Growers attended an agricultural college to obtain their Level 3 certificate in chemical handling. A qualified Vietnamese interpreter was present at the course to ensure that all growers understood that the safe application of chemicals was a legal obligation, not a choice.

“Councilors have a responsibility to the community. We asked them to let people know of the changes we had made, that we were qualified to use these chemicals and were doing so safely,” said Don.

Amid residents’ concerns about water quality, the council also tested water samples from 18 randomly selected water tanks from growers and residents’ properties.

The Logan City Council spokeswoman said that “the investigation did not find evidence to support the allegations (of rainwater tank contamination)”.

Public education needed

The taskforce identified opening lines of communication as one of its main achievements, but now, for growers, the most frustrating part of this exercise has been the mystery surrounding potential changes to legislation (see panel), and what they can expect in the future.

“So far, the three association members who have gone through the application process for building a new greenhouse were not issued a permit. It is expensive to apply and these costs are not refunded,” said Don.

While Don has not yet been affected personally, it’s an issue he’s passionate about.

“All my neighbours support me. They see my staff and I work hard,” he said.

“Only the minority of residents say that the Vietnamese don’t know much about the chemicals. By law, to buy agricultural chemicals, you need a permit. There needs to be more public education.”

Legislation confusion

Increased red tape when applying to build a new greenhouse spells a headache for growers—and no guarantee that their applications will be approved.

Despite efforts made by growers regarding increased compliance with their local council, and the strengthened relationship with council following the Intensive Horticulture Taskforce, growers have been disheartened and confused by reported changes to legislation.

Last year, the local newspaper reported changes to legislation that would affect greenhouse growers, which was the first they’d heard of it.

“While the taskforce was active, the council implemented a new greenhouse law, which wasn’t mentioned at the taskforce meetings, stating that one must submit an application for a new greenhouse or to extend or expand the greenhouses in an existing business. It’s a costly process, and unlikely to be successful—this is how my local councilor explained it to me at the time,” said Lisa Crooks.

However, when she pressed the council for more details, she received conflicting information about whether a new law had been passed. To complicate matters, the council minutes relating to potential new horticulture laws were confidential, and thus unable to be accessed by the public.

A tale of two councils

Part of the confusion relates to an expansion of Logan City in March 2008, which amalgamated Logan City with parts of Gold Coast City and the northern Beaudesert Shire.

Councilor Phil Pidgeon from Logan City Council offered this point of clarification to *Vegetables Australia*: “The legislation has not yet changed but we are bound to carry the old Beaudesert Shire legislation in the former Beaudesert area until such time as we make a decision to change it to one common law”.

A new Beaudesert Shire Planning Scheme was introduced before the councils were amalgamated, which means it must be followed.

“The Beaudesert Shire Planning Scheme 2007 made some types of market gardening ‘impact assessable – inconsistent’ when it commenced in March 2007,” said a Logan City Council spokeswoman. This affected the building of new greenhouses or the expansion of existing greenhouse structures.

“Prior to that, only specific forms of market gardening needed planning approval. Most of the operations that were built only required building approval at the time. The change in 2007 made future market gardens in structures subject to planning approval,” said the spokeswoman.

“Under the rules that the state has given us for writing planning schemes ‘impact assessable – inconsistent’ is as clear as council can make it that a development is not wanted. These are performance-based planning schemes and we are not allowed to prohibit development. As a consequence, in some circumstances, ‘impact assessable – inconsistent’ development can be approved if it can be designed to control the impacts.”

Phil has worked closely with growers regarding the issue of potential changes to legislation. He cautions that industry familiarity is needed if smart decisions are to be made.

“In any regulation that occurs, you can get a situation where decision makers, if they’re not familiar with the industry, suggest and implement the wrong thing. You have to have a feel for the industry and understand the issues,” said Phil.

“In some senses, what’s happening at Logan City is a test case. The city does have a lot of urban development, but it is more mixed acreage, and I’m all for going into bat for those who want to use the land for traditional uses,” he said.

Common sense prevails

Phil acknowledges that complaints have been made about greenhouse growers, but said that these were isolated incidences.

“In Logan City we had the lion’s share of greenhouses in the area; we had one or two complaints about these operations over 10 years. When the councils were amalgamated, there were still very few complaints,” he said.

“The previous Beaudesert Shire Council had a proposal to make market gardening illegal in its shire, which was outrageous—we should minimise the regulations wherever possible.”

While discussions were held about this proposal, Phil said that common sense has prevailed thus far. However, he stressed that the existing legislation is there for a reason.

“If people want to install new greenhouses, then code assessment needs to be done and setback from neighbours’ houses needs to be considered,” he said

“The issue is getting approval for the structures. If the farmers were growing in open air, they wouldn’t need approvals. There has always been an application process for the erection of the structures over 10m², this is a normal requirement as people are required to obtain building approval under the State Government Building Act.”

Appendix eight: case study

Many languages, one voice

LOTE growers from around Australia made great progress at the first National LOTE Grower Forum.

The inaugural National LOTE Grower Forum was a resounding success for Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Cambodian growers, as well as researchers and representatives from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), AUSVEG and Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who attended the meeting in Perth on Saturday 31 May.

The forum, an initiative of the strategy Communicating with Vegetable Growers who speak a LOTE, included short presentations about the National Vegetable Levy R&D Program and process, RIRDC, HAL and EnviroVeg.

Clear communication

Growers discussed preferred communication channels, the purpose of an active communication network and opportunities for engaging in broader industry events. Participants also recalled past R&D outcomes that have been useful and suggested funding priorities for next year’s levy investment.

Joe Elbustani, cucumber and tomato grower and President of New South Wales Greenhouse Association said, “It was great to meet with growers from other areas and discover that we all share similar issues. I hope that everyone who attended takes what they learnt and discussed back to their communities to get everyone on board and make a change for good in the industry”.

Other representatives included Terry Ha, Carol Soo and Tony Har from the Australian Chinese Growers Association of NSW, Boran Huot and Lanh Ngo from the Australian Cambodian Growers Association of NSW, Don Pham and Tommy Le from Vietnamese Farmers Association Queensland, and Sen Thach, Phan Van Le and Phuong Van Vo from South Australia.

New involvement

A newly-formed Vietnamese grower group from the Wanneroo area in Western Australia was represented by David Tran and Thang Le. “We are most grateful to have been invited to attend this forum, because many of our members do not know much about the levy or what information is available to them through the R&D program,” said David.

Kim Nguyen, Secretary of the Vietnamese community group in Carnarvon, Western Australia, who grows tomatoes and capsicum in partnership with her husband, Hoa, agreed. “I have learnt a lot about the way the industry works and the R&D program, and look forward to taking this information and sharing it with other members of the community,” she said.

The LOTE strategy aims to build a foundation for better communication and networks among growers from non-English speaking backgrounds and the rest of the industry, and eventually integrate with the overarching National Vegetable Industry Communication Strategy.

Growers who attended the forum have made a commitment to play a key role in the communication network among growers from a LOTE background on a national level. As the project progresses, the network will continue to grow, involving many people who work with LOTE growers and others who are keen to see improved communication channels within the industry.