

Grower Study Tour - Netherlands and Germany

Richard Mulcahy
AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: VG10702

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Grower Tour
Netherlands and Germany
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Abstract

The 2011 Grower Tour to Germany and Holland saw eight Australian participants visit vegetable growing regions in Europe and learn their practices.

In addition to the farm visits, growers were given the opportunity to attend Fruit Logistica in Berlin, Germany.

Ranging in ages, growers hailed from Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia and toured from 8 February 2011 through to 18 February 2011.

Led by AUSVEG Communications Manager, Hugh Tobin, participants toured Berlin attending Fruit Logistica, local markets and the Fresh Connex Trade Fair. The 2011 Fruit Logistica brought together more than 2,000 companies from across the entire fresh produce value chain around the world while the other destinations familiarized growers with German and European standards and practices in Horticulture.

Leaving Berlin, growers were exposed to leading industry service providers and learnt of the support mechanism they provide to the industry by visiting leading crop protectant, seed genetics and mechanization facilities. These visits were held in between tours of local farming properties.

One participant gave feedback stating: "There is so much to gain. I would love to do more tours if they arise. Farmers need to get out there and see what is happening. I am glad I did it."



Vegetable display at Fruit Logistica

Introduction

The Australian vegetable industry's strategic plan, VegVision 2020, includes five pillars which outline the priority areas for R&D to build and strengthen the industry into the future. Pillar five, "Strengthen the enabling environment, industry capacity, motivation and commitment to meet the VegVision 2020" is concerned with leadership and change.

To support VegVision, the AVIDG commissioned a study in 2007 to investigate the training requirements of Australian vegetable growers. The report concluded that vegetable growers require more leadership and business management skills and that these skills should be firmly tied to the profitability of the business.

People development needs which were identified included improving business management skills based upon:

- Business evaluation and planning
- Understanding costs of production and financial reports
- Better communication
- Developing negotiation and conflict resolution skills
- Improving decision making and managing change
- Creating marketing opportunities

The vegetable industry has therefore clearly identified "leadership and people development" as a priority area for investment in order to build capacity, ensure sustainable and profitable business practices are implemented, and to create future leaders. Numerous strategies have been employed in recent years to meet these people development needs through various "Industry Development" projects.

It has been widely recognised that study tours are an important and effective industry development project, providing individual capacity building and the creation of new learning outcomes. Australian growers have been attending grower tours for years with great success. With support from the National Vegetable Levy, grower tours have allowed Australian growers to expand their knowledge and build relationships between Australian and international industries.

The 2011 tour gave growers the chance to explore the similarities and differences between the European and Australian vegetable industries. This experience benefitted the participants by extending the opportunity to form relationships, identify alternative business management practices and develop personal skills. Another key element was that the growers were able to compare production systems, including costs and profit, with their European counterparts as well as with members of the global horticulture industry by attending the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair.

In this tour, eight participants from across Australia were taken to Germany and Holland, where they visited: vegetable growers, packers, research facilities, merchants, seed facilities, a mechanization plant, a crop protection facility, and markets, as well as attending the Fruit Logistica in Berlin, Germany. The purpose of the tour was to provide an opportunities for growers to undertake formal development programs while building their skillset and knowledge base so that they can be an active member in building a stronger future for the Australian vegetable industry.

AUSVEG Communications Manager Hugh Tobin assisted participants throughout the tour. Members of the group evaluated the tour throughout the trip with evaluation forms submitted at the tour's conclusion.

Acknowledgments

Thanks must go to the many growers and business managers that showed participants through their operations and enlightened them with their business skills and knowledge.

The tour was facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG and was funded through voluntary contributions with matched funding provided by the Australian Government.

Tour participants

Surname	First name	Company	State	Crops
Tobin	Hugh	AUSVEG	VIC	N/A
Baker	Maxwell		TAS	Cauliflowers, peas, carrots
Anderson	Dale		TAS	Carrots
Walker	Ben		VIC	Cabbage, spring onions, spinach, silver beet, turnips, Dutch carrots, beetroot
Apap	Darryl		QLD	Pumpkins
Apap	Sharon		QLD	Pumpkins
Mills	Alex	Elders Rural Services	SA	N/A
Harding	Michael	Elders Rural Services	SA	N/A
Dobson	Brent	Boomaroo	QLD	N/A

Itinerary

Tuesday: 8 February

Home Airports – Berlin, Germany.

Group arrival on Air Berlin flight 6552 at 08:10 at Berlin's Tegel International Airport.

Wednesday and Thursday: 9 February and 10 February

Berlin. Breakfast at the hotel each day, prior to attending the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair, and the FreshConex International Trade Fair for the fresh produce convenience industry, both taking place at Messe Berlin. 3-day entrance ticket is included for each person.

Friday: 11 February

Minibus from Wunderwald picks you up at the hotel at 06:20, and drive to Beusselstrasse 44 N-Q, to meet Herr Kraus at 06:50 for a tour of the Berliner Großmarkt GmbH. This huge wholesale fruit and vegetable market consists of many wholesale distributors supplying groceries and markets in the greater Berlin area. Minibus returns you to the hotel at 08:15 for breakfast, and then you have the remainder of the day available for visits at Fruit Logistica.

Saturday: 12 February

Berlin. After breakfast, a private city sightseeing tour of Berlin, starting at the hotel at 09:30, with English-speaking guide. Finish the tour at the hotel at 12:30.

Sunday: 13 February

Berlin – Cologne - Mannheim. Early breakfast at the hotel and then transfer at 07:15 via Wunderwald bus to the Berlin Hauptbahnhof and board your express train to Cologne.

At the Cologne Bahnhof you are met by charter coach and English-speaking driver from Van Aerschot.

Monday: 14 February

Mannheim – Monheim – Leiden, Netherlands.

After breakfast, check out of the hotel, and travel the short distance to the John Deere Werke, John-Deere-Str. 90, and Mannheim for a tour of the factory, beginning at 08:00. Discussion with Herr Berges at 10:30; 11:15 depart for Monheim.

Monheim headquarters of Bayer CropScience, for an afternoon technical visit and tour of facilities.

Following the afternoon visits, continue to Mönchengladbach for check in and overnight.

Tuesday: 15 February

Netherlands. Breakfast at the hotel, then board the coach with your luggage, and we drive about 45 minutes across the Netherlands border to the head office of Nunhems BV [Voort 6, 6083 AC Nunhem]. The morning will be spent in discussions with officials of the company. Lunch break. [Either at the company or in-town restaurant.]

Drive to Lelystad for a special tour of the Research Unit of Applied Plant Research (PPO) for Arable Farming, Multifunctional Agriculture and Field Production of Vegetables (PPO-AGV). PPO-AGV is part of Wageningen University, located at Edelhertweg 1, 8219 PH Lelystad. A guided tour of the facility with Oane de Hoop at 14:30.

Then proceed to Leiden for overnight, check in, and dinner on own.

Wednesday: 16 February

Netherlands. After breakfast, we'll spend today inspecting the glasshouse vegetable production area in the West of Holland. Glasshouse horticulture is responsible for about 50% of the product value of fruit and vegetables. The most important glasshouse vegetables are sweet peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers. In addition a whole range of other glasshouse vegetables are produced, such as radishes, aubergines, courgettes, chicory, lettuce, fennel and gherkins.

The area of glasshouse concentration lies between The Hague and Rotterdam, and we will meet Dr. Sjaak Bakker, director of the Bleiswijk research station, [Violierenweg 1, 2665 MV Bleiswijk]. Depart the hotel at 07:30, for your meeting starting at 08:15, +31 (0) 317- 485605. Conclude at 09:45. Following this visit, travel to Monster to inspect Koppertcress, contact person: Rob Baan, De Poel 1, 2681 MB Monster – 10:30-11.45. [tel: 0174-242819]

Thursday: 17 February

Netherlands. An early breakfast, and then we travel by coach the short distance to FloraHolland, world's largest building and flower auction at Aalsmeer. Arrive by 07:30, and observe the several auction clocks selling for a total of 125,000 transactions daily – 12 billion cut flowers per year!

Dinner at 6 PM at the floating restaurant "Sea Palace" and then your driver returns you to Leiden for overnight. Overnight again in Leiden.

Friday: 18 February

Leiden – Schiphol Airport - Melbourne.

Breakfast, then a free morning in Leiden for shopping or sightseeing. Check out of your hotel at 13:00h and transfer by coach to Schiphol International Airport for your flight home to Australia. Check in with British Airways not later than 16:00 for BA441 departing at 19:30 for London Heathrow; transfer to Qantas flight 10 departing at 22:00 for Melbourne. Have a safe flight!



Berlin

Tour Report

The following report is a collation of the information collected on the tour during farm and merchant visits, the Fruit Logistica, and in participant evaluations of the tour.

- **Day one: Tuesday 8 February**

The group left Australia and arrived into Berlin, Germany at 8.10am at Berlin's Tegel International Airport.

- **Day two: Wednesday 9 February**

Today was the first of two full days the group spent at the Fruit Logistica Fair.

Fruit Logistica is the most important business and communication arena of the international fresh produce trade. The industry's key decision makers are there as exhibitors and trade visitors and have the opportunity of approaching potential business partners with their services/products.

This specialist trade fair allowed the group to learn about the fresh fruit and vegetable business by seeing products from across the entire added-value chain, from growing to the point-of-sale.

Products on show include fresh, unprocessed fruit and vegetables, dried fruit, nuts, herbs and spices, organic products and self-service flowers and potted plants. Suppliers of products and services for packaging, storage, transport, warehousing and product presentation also exhibit their offerings. A further important element of Fruit Logistica was the service market with Information Technology solutions.



Impressive fruit display with water feature at Fruit Logistica

The itinerary for the day was as follows:

10.00am - Enhanced efficiency fertigation for improved quality management

Speaker:

Dr. Bert Jaeger

Business Unit COMPO Expert

10.15am - Controlled release fertilizer for successful orchard management

Speaker:

Dr. Georg Ebert

Business Unit COMPO Expert

10.30am - Post-harvest fertilization as key factor for optimal growth and fruit

Speaker:

Dr. Donato Tesi

COMPO Agro specialities S.r.l., Italy

11.00am-12.00pm - Retail: potential for profit in the fresh produce department

The first Hall Forum focuses on food retailing and the POS. Where can potential improvements be made in the fresh produce section? What is the best way to present the range of healthy food, fruit and vegetables, and modern convenience products, smoothies, etc.? How can the trend toward healthy nutrition be implemented more effectively to increase product sales and turnover? What is the best way to approach consumers? How can suppliers contribute? How can they build their image and optimise their positioning?

Presenter: Kaasten Reh, FRUCHTHANDEL MAGAZINE

Speaker: Konrad Kreuzberg / Edeka Kreuzberg

Speaker: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Hendrik Schröder, Chair in Marketing & Trade, University, Germany

14.00-14.30pm – Frutotrade: New age of worldwide fruit trading

Frutotrade is world's first professional fruit trading platform which is developed for information exchange between suppliers and buyers of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Frutotrade seminar will include Frutotrade.com presentation and main portal description.

Presentation will be focused on fresh market today and tomorrow, Frutotrade.com features, advantages and potential.

14.00-16.00pm – ECPA: The global impact of Europe's agriculture and food policies: a panel debate

A brand name promises unique, first-class quality and consumers are willing to pay a higher price for more quality. Especially in times of low returns, a brand name is a valuable tool when it comes to portraying a positive image and position. It is also an effective way to add value. What makes a brand unique? How do commercial brands compare with private labels? What does it take to successfully develop and build up a brand - especially in the fresh produce sector?

What key factors need to be considered and implemented?

Presenter: Kaasten Reh, FRUCHTHANDEL MAGAZINE

Speaker: Luc Clerx, ZESPRI International Europe N.V., Belgium

Speaker: Hermann G. Sievers, Sievers Marken + Konzeptberatung

16.00pm-17.00pm - Spanish/ Portuguese Afternoon

- **Day three: Thursday 10 February**

This was the second day that the group spent at the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair. 2,452 exhibitors from 84 countries presented the full spectrum of the logistics services required to ensure a year-round supply of top-quality fresh fruit and vegetables to consumers all over the world. Some 90% of the exhibitors in Berlin came from outside Germany. FRESHCONEX 2011, Europe's unique trade fair for the fresh produce convenience sector, was staged this year for the fourth time in conjunction with Fruit Logistica where almost 100 exhibitors from 18 countries showcased their products and services. Over 1,000 media representatives from 50 countries were accredited for the top fresh produce industry trade event in Berlin.



Bayer CropScience presentation at Fruit Logistica

The itinerary was as follows:

9.30am-11.00am - The Ukrainian Market for Fruit and Vegetables: Current Situation and Perspectives

Fruit and vegetables are a key area within the Ukrainian agriculture sector. The event planned as part of the world's leading trade fair in the fresh fruit trade - FRUIT LOGISTICA - on 10 February 2011 in Berlin is to provide a general overview on the current situation and potential of the sector in Ukraine. Questions such as "Where are the main cultivation areas?", "What fruits are grown?", "How are the producers structured and organised?" are to be discussed, as well as "What impact did Ukraine becoming a member of the WTO in 2008 have on the import and export structures in the fresh fruit industry?", "What is the wholesale and retail network like?" and "What opportunities are there for German/Western entrepreneurs?" Ukraine's immediate proximity to the EU makes the country extremely

interesting both as a production and a trading partner in the fruit and vegetables industry. In this context high-quality production structures and reliable supplier structures, quality assurance and product certification in compliance with EU standards are gaining increasing importance. Together with interested exhibitors and professional visitors, competent sector representatives will be discussing the above questions, as well as various special aspects. Initial contacts can be made at the following get-together.

10.00am – Enhanced efficiency fertigation for improved quality management

Speaker:
Dr. Bert Jaeger
Business Unit COMPO Expert

10.15am - Controlled release fertilizer for successful orchard management

Speaker:
Dr. Georg Ebert
Business Unit COMPO Expert

10.30am - Foliar nutrition of plants for quality fruit production

Speaker:
Dr. Victoria Fernandez
Forest Genetics and Ecophysiology Research Group E.T.S.
Technical University of Madrid
Spain

11.00am-12.00pm – Sustainability: value for the long term

The issue currently dominates many discussions and receives extensive coverage in the media landscape. Sustainable management is in demand - by consumers, organisations and the retail trade. Some retailers are already promoting this topic. It is also high on the agenda for more than a few companies. But many don't really know much about the concept. What is sustainability? In many cases, the meaning is different depending on the degree of understanding, the branch of business, company or trade level. This Hall Forum focuses on clarification and defining what sustainability can mean for the different levels of the fresh produce business. It also addresses the question: How can sustainability be implemented to create value?

Presenter: Kaasten Reh, FRUCHTHANDEL MAGAZINE
Speaker: Dr. Ludger Breloh, Rewe-Group, Germany
Speaker: Ben Horsbrugh, The Univeg Deutschland Group, Germany
Speaker: Theo de Groot, M.P.S. Sustainable Quality

13.00pm-14.30pm - First Global IFPS Forum

The International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) is composed of national produce associations from around the globe. The long term objective of the Federation is to improve the supply chain efficiency of the fresh produce industry through developing, implementing and managing harmonised international standards. The Federation constitutes a global forum to address issues related to international harmonisation or standardisation in the fresh produce industry, and is the first incorporated body consisting of national organisations providing direct representation of their respective countries' industry membership.
Presenter: Dr. Hans Maurer, International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS)

15.00pm-16.00pm - Bayer Crop Science AG - Food Chain Partnership in Italy: MAGIS - an innovative approach for sustainable viticulture

Water is a key theme in many countries. And it will continue to gain importance as the world population grows. Not only people have an enormous need for water. The production of food

also requires vast quantities of this valuable resource. This is especially true for fruit and vegetables. Virtually everything depends on water. What is the situation today? How are things taking shape on a global level? Selected examples are used to outline what lies ahead in the future and how growers can gain insight into the subject of water.

Presenter: Michael Schotten, FRUCHTHANDEL MAGAZINE

Speaker: Prof. Dr. Alberto Garrido, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

Speaker: Dr. Josef Tanny, Volcani Center, Israel

Speaker: Roberto Vega, Dole Food Company, France

15.00pm – 16.00pm - BASF Crop Protection Panel Discussion

- **Day four: Friday 11 February**

Today the group boarded a minibus at 6.20am and were driven to Beusselstrasse arriving at Berliner Grossmarkt at 6.50am where they had a guided tour of the markets.

This visit to the markets was an invaluable experience for the group as they were able to get an insight into the workings of a huge produce operation. The fruit and vegetable section of the wholesaler market is 85,000 square metres in total area which is divided into: 34,000 square metres hall space, 22,000 square metres retail space and 80 loading ramps. The markets have a central cooling system providing individual cooling for each of the 45 fruit and vegetable wholesalers selling more than 500 different types of fruits and vegetables, with a large share of regionally and organically grown produce, depending on the season. The movement of goods totals approximately 220,000 tonnes per year and there are more than 1,000 employees.

The group were able to see the workings of a market from every different aspect. The markets are known to be a one-stop-shop and the group were able to observe this through seeing that there were: storage areas and cold storage, trucking and delivery services, truck wash, truck repairs, service stations for forklift trucks as well as battery specialists.

The markets also have representatives from the following areas: customs, veterinary and food supervisory authorities, plant protection agency, experts for fruits and vegetables, Central Market and Price Reporting Agency (ZMP), gastronomy, waste management and cleaning services.

At 8.15am the group returned to the hotel for breakfast and spent the remainder of the day at the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair.



Berliner Grossmarkt



The Managing Director of Berliner Grossmarkt speaks to the group



Tour participants learning about the packing stage at the Berliner Grossmarkt

- **Day five: Saturday 12 February**

Today the group had a private tour of Berlin, sightseeing all of the main attractions to give the group a cultural background into the Berlin. The tour began at 9.30am and finished at 12.30pm. The English-speaking tour guide told the group interesting stories about the history of Berlin and everyone appreciated the chance to learn about another country.



Berlin

- **Day six: Sunday 13 February**

Today was a day of travel for the group from Berlin to Cologne by express train, then Mannheim.

- **Day seven: Monday 14 February**

Today the group visited the John Deere Factory and Bayer CropScience.

The tour of the John Deere factory was not only educational but also fascinating for the group, as they were able to view the whole production line of building tractors and machinery from one of the world's most respected agricultural machinery manufacturers. The company John Deere has grown and prospered through a long-standing partnership with the world's most productive farmers and is

now a global company with several equipment operations and complementary service businesses. The company is well regarded in the Australian horticulture industry for its distinguished brand and advanced mechanical technology. Growers were exposed to and learned from the complex process it takes to construct these machines.

In the afternoon the group headed to Monheim for a technical visit and tour of the Bayer CropScience facilities.

This tour allowed the group to see the workings of the Bayer CropScience facility and gave background on the company's origins. The company has a strong local presence, with extensive and impressive product offerings in insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and seed treatments. They have pioneered many of the most important advances in crop protection and offer what is arguably the most comprehensive list of crop protection and production products in Australia. This insight into chemical use in Australia was an invaluable lesson for the group, as it they learnt the process of how new chemistry is discovered, replicated and brought onto the market. This look into the background of crop protectant development gave the group a new appreciation of the chemicals that they have used but never thought of how they were created.

- **Day eight: Tuesday 15 February**

Today the group had a tour of the Nunhems facility, which is located just across the Netherlands border. This tour linked in with yesterday's visit to the Bayer CropScience facility. The group learnt about what extensive and rigorous processes are required to identify and breed new seed or plant varieties, that are able to cope with modern horticulture. The group learnt about the inner workings of the company and how they are able to reach such a high profile as the 'the global specialist'. Nunhems offers products, concepts and expertise to the professional horticultural production industry and supply chain. With an extensive range of 28 crops and some 2,500 varieties, Nunhems is present in all major vegetable production areas in the world.

In the afternoon the group were driven to Lelystad for a special tour of the Research Unit of Applied Plant Research (PPO) for Arable Farming, Multifunctional Agriculture and Field Production of Vegetables (PPO-AGV). The tour focused on applicable innovations in the production chain and practical cultivation and farming concepts. The PPO aim to improve the economic profitability of individual farms and sectors via the transfer of knowledge and implementation of practical solutions. Key aspects for the company are: crop health and weed control, fertilisation, productivity and perspectives of agricultural activities, adaptation of crop and farm management systems to environmental, technical and social preconditions, the development and practical application of integrated and organic production systems and biodiversity. The information which the group was given covered many different aspects and opened their eyes into the different approaches that can be taken in various areas of running a horticultural business.

- **Day nine: Wednesday 16 February**

The group spent today being shown around a glasshouse vegetable production area which was located in the West of Holland. This was an important look into a method of producing fruit and vegetables. The vegetable varieties most prominently grown in these glasshouses were cucumbers, tomatoes and capsicums. The in-depth look into this type of production was very interesting to the

group because some practices were similar to those in Australia, yet there were many techniques that are yet to be adopted in Australia.

In the afternoon the group visited the Port of Rotterdam where they met with Dr Sjaak Bakker, from the Greenhouse Horticulture Unit of Wageningen University and Research. The Netherlands has a large greenhouse industry worth \$25 billion annually, and the Wageningen group is the leading greenhouse research unit in Europe. Having the chance to discuss topics one-on-one with Dr Bakker was a fantastic opportunity for the group to learn about the intricate workings of a greenhouse, as well as ask questions about the associated advantages and disadvantages.

- **Day ten: Thursday 17 February**

The last day out for the group was visiting FloraHolland, which was an amazing journey through a huge international floriculture operation and gave scope to the scale Europe operates on. FloraHolland has an intricate and high-quality network of companies, ranging from breeders and growers to sales experts and export firms, representing every aspect of the business. The Netherlands is the place where supply and demand come together, servicing Europe and beyond. FloraHolland flower auction plays a key role in the Netherlands, land of Floriculture where its position as marketplace fulfils the role of matchmaker, intermediary and knowledge centre.

The daily auctions and sales mean there are approximately 125,000 transactions every single day. The group was amazed to learn that FloraHolland sell, on average, 12 billion flowers every year.



Flower processing at FloraHolland

- **Day ten: Thursday 17 February**

The group all flew out of Leiden and back to their home states in Australia.

Tour participants' observations

Berliner Grossmarkt:

- “The market, as with everything in Berlin, appeared exceptionally clean and organised. Looking at the produce on this level highlighted the importance of import/export in Europe with produce from all over the world on display, i.e. lots from Spain and tropical fruits from South America.”
- “It stands out to me that Australia’s standard of quality is much higher than the Europeans, when selling and marketing fresh fruit and vegetables.”
- “Fruit market was most enjoyable and to see the different packaging was unbelievable.”
- “It was good to see how the fresh market supply chain worked in Berlin. While I don’t think we saw a lot of the market, it was different from Melbourne Markets and also similar in some ways. There seemed to be little to no growers selling directly.”



Berliner Grossmarkt

John Deere Factory and Bayer CropScience:

- “John Deere emulate German efficiency with 92 custom made tractors manufactured every day. Bayer was a highlight of my tour! To see the work and timeframes involved in developing pesticides plus the cost and Research and Development side to horticulture was great. A must for every tour!”
- “Both of these visits were great, it’s amazing to think that a new tractor can be manufactured every three minutes and thirty seconds.”
- “John Deere factory was amazing. Bayer chemical plant was very interesting.”
- “The John Deere factory was great. An incredible daily build rate and a lot of innovation and automation involved. Bayer was great as well. Especially being able to see the processes involved in their chemical products.”

Nunhems and FoodCenter Amsterdam:

- “I never had a chance to see seed thermocuring equipment in action before. The history of the company was also very interesting and I now appreciate it.”
- “The Nunhems tour was good, it was interesting to compare the difference with a small seed genetics business to that of the potato genetics business that I have visited. The FoodCenter visit gave a good insight into different ways of marketing produce.”
- “Nunhems was another good insight into how much goes into seed manufacturing.”

Glasshouse and Port of Rotterdam:

- “The Port of Rotterdam – I could not have ever imagined what an enormous port covering so many areas it would be. Glasshouse – certainly great to see how things are on the other side of the world.”
- “The research centre was great. It is well run and I think the Netherlands get high productivity out of its contracted research. The micro-herbs were really innovative, eccentric and highly organised.”
- “The glasshouse research centre gave an interesting view of issues relating to the large hydroponics industry in Holland.”

FloraHolland:

- “FloraHolland was huge! What a set-up – flower trolleys, forklifts and people bustling everywhere. This was the highlight of the trip. In your wildest dreams you could never have believed how big this is.”
- “The complex of FloraHolland is amazing. The main selling pad is 200 acres in size and it sells approximately 40 million flowers and plants per day. A massive daily operation. It’s hard to imagine the amount of flowers being sold each day. A lot of automation is involved.”

Fruit Logistica 2010

Tour participants found the Fruit Logistica 2011 to be a highlight of the tour. Participants had the opportunity to meet potential new trade partners, view new technology in action, and visit equipment providers.

Several forums, press conferences, award ceremonies, and exhibitor events were held over the course of the event and growers had the opportunity to learn about aspects of the international fresh produce industry most relevant to them.



Tour group at Fruit Logistica



Packaging display at Fruit Logistica



Speaker session at Fruit Logistica

Tour participants' observations from the Fruit Logistica 2010:

- “The best days! What are we doing wrong in Australia? We are dragging the chain. I had so much to take in. Wow! Fruit and vegetable prices are very cheap, tasty and packed differently.”
- “It blew me away when seeing what was available in the machinery section and the fruit and vegetable sections. That was something I’d never believe I would see. We are seeing things that you would not see if you were not on the trip.”
- “I could not believe how big this trade fair was, every display was excellent and of a very high standard. The two hour seminar with Bayer was particularly interesting.”
- “Really eye-opening, the overall size of the Fruit Logistica trade fair was unbelievable. We had an afternoon session with Bayer, covering quality assurance procedures within Italy.”
- “The size of the trade fair was mind-blowing! I felt like a kid in a candy store. I spent the afternoon talking to seed companies that operate in Australia, like Rijk Zwaan, Nunhems, Clause, Bejo etc.”
- “Fruit Logistica is massive and talking to the guys from the major companies like Bayer, Nunhems and other seed or chemical companies about products and developments was very productive.”



Colourful displays and friendly staff



Darryl and Sharon Apap

Summary

The farm visits and related activities provided an opportunity for the tour participants to explore new production methods, compare production systems, and investigate state-of-the-art water technologies in countries with similar, or even more severe, climates to Australia.

Through their attendance at the Fruit Logistica 2011, tour participants were able to develop international networks and examine the state of the international fresh produce industry.

One of the major issues identified with the tour was its timing. Many Australian growers were unable to attend as they were in the midst of their peak summer/autumn harvesting time. Fruit Logistica is held annually in February and this timing clashes with Australia's harvesting season. This is an issue that is difficult to avoid. A trend is emerging that Fruit Logistica is the highlight of the tour and exposes Australian growers to the technology and scale of how Europe operates.

Participants' comments on the value of the tour

- "The mix of people on the tour and Fruit Logistica was great."
- "It was a good time of year for me to travel and Fruit Logistica was something I wanted to attend."
- "I will never forget the people on the tour and the information gained was diverse and world class."
- "The tour was a unique experience that will benefit me for a long time."
- "The networking opportunities are great and the tour provides an opportunity to improve participants' businesses."
- "I'd recommend any growers that can afford to go on the tour to go, especially if it's subsidised. It's very eye-opening."



Tour group dinner

Recommendations for future tours

1. The tours are very beneficial to Australian growers and should continue on an annual schedule. Fruit Logistica is proving itself as a critical educational experience to Australian horticultural produces.
2. The ideal length for these tours seems to be consistent at 10 days.
3. It was felt that although seeing the large scale operation was a fantastic and eye opening opportunity, it would be useful to visit farms that operate on the same scale of their farms back in Australia.

Vegetables Australia magazine - March 2011 edition

“Fresh” Logistica impresses grower tour participants

With the opportunity to visit the world’s largest fresh fruit and vegetable trade fair in Berlin, participants on the latest grower tour expressed their satisfaction at seeing high quality produce on show, writes Andrew Mahony.

Fruit Logistica showcases more than 2,300 companies, exhibiting everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to transport and logistical systems.

Spanning three days in February, the grower tour enabled participants to explore the plethora of products the event had to offer.

One highlight of Fruit Logistica was the focus on pre-packaged, ready to cook produce.

AUSVEG’s Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Hugh Tobin, said that the focus on convenience for the consumer was impressive.

“There was a lot more focus on the consumer and targeting produce at them that is convenient,” he said.

“All the products were well-presented and packaged in a very appealing way.”

Growers praised the positive use of products that could be regarded as waste, particularly small carrots.

Darryl and Sharon Apap were two growers impressed with what they saw during the trip.

Mr and Mrs Apap, from near Mission Beach in Queensland, were severely affected by Cyclone Yasi, which hit just days before the tour began.

A world away from the destruction in Queensland, Mr Apap said: “Seeing all the different types of fruit and vegetables in the markets, it was amazing how far everything travels but still looks fresh.

“I was surprised the markets are producing such good quality bananas that are travelling such a long distance.”

Mr Apap said that attending international events such as Fruit Logistica provided some important perspective on the industry.

“It broadens your vision,” he said.

“You need to get your blinkers off and see what others are doing around the world.

"I'd really recommend that others take advantage of these tours that are on offer." Fruit Logistica certainly plays a role in displaying innovation in the fruit and vegetable industries.

One particular aspect that the growers were impressed by was the many ways in which products are packaged for the consumer's convenience.

Mr Apap said that the industries in Australia could take note.

"All the innovative products we saw were directed at making it as easy as possible for the consumer," he said.

"Australia could learn and adapt from what we saw is happening in terms of packaging of produce.

Also as part of the Berlin tour, the growers attended the Berliner Grossmarkt - a wholesale market that expands across 330,000 square metres and consists of more than 300 regular retailers.

Following the stop in Germany, the tour then moved on to the second and final country - the Netherlands.

This part of the trip saw visits to John Deere and Bayer CropScience, as well as glasshouse vegetable production areas, which account for roughly 50 per cent of the Netherlands' fruit and vegetable market.