

Horticulture Innovation Australia

Final Report

PIRSA Netherlands Trip

Richard Mulcahy
AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: VG14709

VG14709

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Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to detail the findings from VG14709 2015 Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) Netherlands mission which took place from 16-21 April 2015.

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Media summary

A number of AUSVEG SA growers recently accompanied the South Australian Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Leon Bignell MP, on a delegation to the Netherlands to learn about advanced horticultural production from 16-21 April 2015.

The growers were funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia and were able to gain an insight in to current trends and innovations in horticultural technology in the Netherlands and travel with the South Australian Agriculture Minister, the Hon. Leon Bignell MP. The primary aim of the tour was to investigate the suitability of these technologies to South Australia's horticulture sector. The Netherlands is a world leader in cropping technology and is home to a number of large supply chain companies, and the delegation formed relationships with Dutch counterparts that will promote collaboration in horticulture innovation.

The tour commenced in Rotterdam, with a visit to the head office of Rijk Zwaan, a major developer of seed varieties; as well as hearing a presentation from Hoogendoorn Glasshouse Automation. The delegation also visited Syngenta and Enza Zaden, where the delegation toured their greenhouses and packing warehouses. A highlight of the trip was a visit to Koppert Cress, who specialise in growing unique plants from seedlings. The owner, Rob Baan, provided delegates with a history of the company, and provided samples for tasting.

The final day in Rotterdam consisted of a visit to Market Hall, which consists of a series of food stalls situated beneath a giant arc. On display were a variety of fresh produce, sweets, freshly produced drinks as well as seafood. Additionally, the group had the pleasure of taking a boat to tour of the port of Rotterdam, which is one of the largest ports in the world. The group witnessed the various shipyards, docks and a multitude of containers being loaded on to various vessels.

The delegation then travelled to Amsterdam to visit the Amsterdam Food Centre, where they were provided with a tour of the facilities and a demonstration of how the needs of retailers, caterers and other grocers are met by the wholesale markets. The day was completed with a visit to Kubo who specialise in greenhouse technology, and the delegation was joined by the Hon. Geoff Brock MP, Minister for Regional Development. A major focus of the tour was employment in South Australia, with Minister Bignell and Minister Brock discussing opportunities to increase horticultural jobs in South Australia via the construction of greenhouses. The Ministers discussed costs, employment opportunities and potential projects with Henk van Tuyl, Export Manager at Kubo.

AUSVEG SA and other groups will be conducting follow up consultations with the South Australian Government to determine ways to utilise international technology and expertise to benefit the local industry. It is encouraging that the current South Australian Government sees opportunities to further develop the local industry and AUSVEG SA thanks Minister Bignell for hosting the hugely successful delegation.

Expected outcomes and how they were achieved

The key objectives of the 2015 PIRSA Netherlands Mission were:

- Gain an understanding of the current trends in horticulture technology and innovation from the Netherlands' perspective.
- Investigate suitability of technology and innovation to South Australia's horticulture sector with the aim of enhancing productivity and quality.
- Identify and form partnerships with relevant Dutch counterparts to promote collaboration in horticulture development.

Participants were provided with tours of a number of packaging facilities throughout the Netherlands, providing insight into the horticultural technology in use, and the similarities and differences between Australian and Dutch growing techniques. Participants on the 2015 PIRSA Netherlands Mission had the opportunity to form partnerships with their Dutch counterparts and gained a wealth of information that will enhance their own operations in areas such as crop protection, packaging and marketing.

As a part of the mission, participants are expected to bring the information home and implement what they have learned while also sharing the information with industry colleagues.

Participants provided verbal and written feedback after each day to capture key findings; the quotes below represent a sample of the feedback provided:

What was best about the tour?

- "The trip ran smoothly and it was great interacting with growers from different areas of horticulture."
- "The tour to the Amsterdam Food Centre was the highlight of the tour."
- "Produce Markets – I was able to come back with new concepts and ideas."
- "The tour has also been a great highlight in itself as it has allowed me to form connections with the tour delegates and those we have met during the tour."
- "Rob Baan from Koppert Cress is a very intelligent guy and had a top set up."
- "Seeing Rob Baan's hi-tech set up [made me think about] potential improvements to our facility."
- "Being able to see the different ways for which produce was packaged and sold have given me good inspirations for which maybe applicable to my business."

Participants also ranked the activities in order of benefit, and the trip to Koppert Cress, the Amsterdam Food Centre (Food Wholesale Market) and the Market Hall visit in Rotterdam all ranked highly.

Mission report

Day one: Thursday 16 April

After landing in Amsterdam, the group went directly to De Lier (West of Rotterdam) to visit the head office of Rijk Zwaan, a major breeder of seed varieties and Hoogendoorn Glasshouse Automation.

Kevin Spoelder of Hoogendoorn Automation, who specialise in automation technologies for the horticulture sector, spoke about innovation of automation processes in horticulture, particularly in climate, water and energy management.

The delegation then toured Rijk Zwaan's factory, and an area used for packing seed varieties, as well as their warehouse facilities. Rijk Zwaan currently generate around 300 million EURO in revenue annually, and are hoping to reach 500 million in the coming years by expanding their facility.



The group before the tour of the Rijk Zwaan facility

The group was shown the different technologies used to separate seeds. Interestingly, the technology has remained the same since the process began; with a calibration tool used to separate seeds from debris and a weight tool separating heavier seeds from lighter ones using gravity. The only aspects that have changed are the materials used to build the tools (previously wooden) and the size.

The facility operates in a systematic manner, with individual areas separated by firewalls to prevent extensive damage in case of a fire. Additionally, each seed variety is stored across 3 separate facilities to further mitigate risk.

The delegation had dinner at the Old Dutch Restaurant with the Netherlands Export Combination (NEC) – who hosted the delegation whilst in the Netherlands. Here, we met Leon Bignell MP and some other delegates for the first time.



Meet and greet dinner

The dinner provided an excellent opportunity for the delegates to get to know each other and their Dutch hosts. During the dinner, Joost Van Dam from the Netherlands Export Combination gave an overview on what the next 5 days would entail and what to expect.

Day two: Friday 17 April

The day began with a bus trip to Koppert Cress, who specialise in growing unique plants from seedlings. Owner, Mr. Rob Baan gave us a brief history of the company, and provided samples for tasting.

Mr. Baan is extremely passionate about food, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the various health benefits of vegetables. He told the delegates that Koppert Cress had developed 63 types of Radish, each having a particular taste. The delegation was treated to various flavours of radish including oyster, honey, cucumber, nut/mud, as well as one which made the tongue tingle, then go numb. We were advised that this type of radish had properties which could prevent malaria.



Koppert Cress boardroom – tasting radish

A presentation was given on life expectancy, with Mr. Baan explaining how the consumption of particular foods having the ability to impact on life expectancy. Contrary to common beliefs, Mr. Baan explained that life expectancy 200 years ago was in fact higher than today, and has declined as a result of processed foods and cancers associated with smoking.



Leon Bignell MP enjoying the tasting session

Mr. Baan explained that Koppert Cress take a very direct approach when dealing with end users. Various meeting rooms as well as a demonstration kitchen have been built in the office, allowing chefs to be introduced and experiment with new products. Every day, more than 50 Koppert Cress staff supply Dutch traders and wholesalers, who in turn distribute the vegetables globally. The end users of Koppert Cress are mainly chefs, restaurants, caterers, hotels and food services.



Rob Baan providing us with a cooking demonstration

The delegation then had a tour of Koppert Cress' glasshouse facility, which included a kid's area aimed at promoting vegetable consumption at a young age.

The delegation then visited Enza Zaden and Syngenta. Enza Zaden are an international seed breeding company that focus on research and development, with facilities located in Australia and New Zealand.

Jan Panman from Enza Zaden took the delegation around the facility, including greenhouses filled with vegetables such as tomato, lettuce, onion and cucumber. Sprays at the top of the greenhouses sprayed water every few minutes to maintain moisture levels of approximately 70% as this moisture level is the most conducive for the plants inside to grow and to produce the highest yields.



The group walking around the Enza Zaden greenhouse facilities

The delegation finished the day with a visit to Syngenta's facility, where they were shown different packaging methods first hand, with machines packing seeds based on weight as well as seed count. A lab testing demonstration was also provided, with a worker demonstrating the protocol for checking if seeds are contaminated. Participants were amazed at how stringent the contamination testing processes were, with seeds divided in to groups of 2,000 prior to having an antibody added. If the sample turned yellow, the whole batch was subject to heat repeated treatment and then re-tested. However, for some seeds (e.g. for tomatoes), if a contaminant is present, the whole batch has to be destroyed.

Day three: Saturday 18 April

The group had the pleasure of going on a boat tour of the port of Rotterdam, one of the largest ports in the world. The group witnessed the various shipyards and docks loading a multitude of containers on to various vessels. We then had lunch near the port, which was hosted by Leon Bignell MP.



Group shot before the port tour (left) and lunch after (right)

In the afternoon the delegation visited Market Hall, a series of food stalls situated beneath a giant arc. A variety of fresh produce, sweets, freshly produced drinks as well as seafood was on sale.



Con Laftsis inspecting some produce (left) and stalls of fresh produce at Market Hall (right)

Day four: Sunday 19 April

Travel Day

Day five: Monday 20 April

The group visited the Amsterdam Food Centre, where they were provided with a tour of the facilities and a demonstration of how the needs of retailers, caterers and other grocers are met by the wholesale markets.



Some of the fresh produce in the cool room

The food centre covers roughly 26 acres and comprises approximately 90 companies selling vegetables, fruit, meat, poultry and other foods. Some of the growers mentioned that the market offered slightly different varieties of vegetables compared to the Adelaide Produce Markets. Some of the packaging also differed, for example, baby spinach was packaged in a container as opposed to a loose plastic wrap, with the container reportedly improving shelf life.

The day finished with a visit to Kubo, who specialise in greenhouse technology. We were joined by Geoff Brock MP – Minister for Regional Development, South Australia.



Kubo's greenhouses

A major focus of the Kubo visit was employment opportunities for South Australia, with Minister Bignell and Minister Brock discussing opportunities to increase horticultural jobs in South Australia via the construction of greenhouses. The Ministers discussed costs, employment opportunities and potential projects with Henk van Tuyl, Export Manager at Kubo.



Mr. Van Tuyl presenting to the delegates

Day six: Tuesday 21 April

Fly back to Australia

Implications for Australian horticulture

The 2015 PIRSA Netherlands Mission provided Australian vegetable growers with the opportunity to establish partnerships with a number of Dutch counterparts. This facilitated the sharing of information with the Dutch and other tour delegates from different areas of Australian horticulture and government.

The Netherlands is a world leader in horticultural technology, contributing to them being one of the largest exporters of vegetables. Participants gained invaluable insights from witnessing their wholesale operations and the differences and similarities between vegetable packaging.

While there are many similarities between Australia and the Netherlands, tour participants felt that Australian fresh produce is similar in quality if not better. This is despite the Netherlands boasting a reputation for greenhouse technology and innovation. Growers were surprised by the sheer number and quantity of land dedicated to greenhouses. Growers noted that the technology was world class, but questioned whether it would be realistic to implement on a large scale in Australia due to high costs, such as land and labour prices in Australia.

Given recent factory closures in South Australia, Ministers Bignell and Brock both discussed funding options for greenhouses to be built in South Australia, to create jobs and stimulate the South Australian economy, as well serve to boost horticulture.

How the information gathered will be disseminated

Following the mission, participants have kept in regular contact to discuss various parts of the mission and further develop networks. All participants exchanged details during the mission in order to keep in touch. AUSVEG also encouraged participants to attend the 2015 National Horticulture Convention in order to share all the information gained from the mission with their industry associates.

Upon returning to Australia, a debriefing session was held and participants discussed the mission and its outcomes. Minister Bignell has also invited participants to a dinner event aimed at strengthening ties with the industry.

Contact details have all been kept on file, and tour leader Steve Razdan has been keeping in contact with participants to ensure that information sharing is taking place.

Itinerary

DAY 1 THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
1.15pm	Business delegation arrives into the Netherlands Own arrangements to hotel.	Hotel: Bilderberg Parkhotel Rotterdam Address: Westersingel 70, 3015 LB Rotterdam
3.30pm	Visit De Lier Rijk Zwaan Hogendoorn Glasshouse automation	
5.00pm	Return to hotel	
7.00pm	Meet and greet with Netherlands Export Combination (NEC) and dinner. 10min walk from Manhattan Hotel, dinner at own expense	Venue: Restaurant Old Dutch Address: Rochussenstraat 20, 3015 EK Rotterdam
DAY 2 FRIDAY 17 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
Minister Bignell will join delegates on this day		
8.30- 10.00am	Pick up from hotel by NEC and visit to Koppert Cress B.V. , introduction, tasting and tour	Address: De Poel 1 - 2681 MB Monster - The Netherlands Contact: Carola van Hagen Tel: +31 (0)174 51 95 62 - Mobile: +31 (0)6 835 21 657 Carola@koppertcress.com
12.00- 2.00pm	Visit to Enza Zaden – seed production company	Contact: Jan Panman (Region Manager Asia, Africa and Oceania) Tel: +31(0)228350100 Mobile: +31(0)651582890 j.panman@enzazaden.nl
2.30-4.30pm	Visit to Syngenta – seed innovation	Contact: Petra Krab, Corporate Communications (+31 228 366 799 or Kim Gieling (+31 228 366 037) petra.krab@SYNGENTA.COM
	Transfer back to hotel and free evening	
DAY 3 SATURDAY 18 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
Minister Bignell will join delegates on this day		
9.30-	Pick up from hotel by NEC and transfer to Rotterdam Harbour	

11.30am	<p>for Spido Tour</p> <p>Among the busy traffic of sea-going and inland ships, this trip is a special journey through one of the largest harbours in the world.</p> <p>You can see Rotterdam's impressive skyline with its imposing buildings glide by, and then get a unique view of the harbours shipyards, docks and the hypermodern transshipping of thousands of containers.</p> <p>The tour will end with a view of the steamship 'Rotterdam', the former cruise flagship of shipping company Holland America Line.</p>	
12.30-2.00pm	Lunch hosted by Minister Bignell	Venue: Restaurant Zeezout Address: Westerkade 11b 3016 CL Rotterdam
3.00-4.00pm	Visit to Market Hall (Markthal Rotterdam)	
	Located at the historic location of Binnenrotte, next to Blaak Station, Market Hall is the largest weekly open air fresh food and hardware market in Rotterdam.	
	Transfer back to hotel and free evening	
DAY 4		
SUNDAY 19 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
	Travel day from Rotterdam to Amsterdam Own arrangements	Hotel: Hampshire Hotel – Eden Amsterdam Address: Amstel 144, 1017 AE Amsterdam
DAY 5		
MONDAY 20 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
8.00-10.00am	<p>Pick up from hotel and visit to Amsterdam Food Centre (Food Wholesale Market)</p> <p>Wholesale supplier of meat, poultry, game, fish, vegetables and fruit to retail, supermarket and other institutions across Amsterdam.</p>	
	Return to hotel	
3.00-5.00pm	<p>Pick up from hotel and visit to Kubo - greenhouse climate technology</p> <p>Netherlands' leading greenhouse manufacturer.</p>	<p>Contact: Mr. Henk van Tuyl (Export Manager) Address: Vlotlaan 710, 2681 TX Monster T: +31 174 286 161 vantuyl@kubo.nl</p>
	Transfer back to hotel and free evening	
DAY 6		
TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2015		
TIME	PROGRAM DETAILS	COMMENTS
	Fly back to Australia	

Recommendations

- The tour was extremely well received overall, however, all participants commented that they would have liked to have met local growers in the Netherlands.
- Participants mentioned that there were too many trips to seed processing facilities.
- The itinerary was late to be finalised by PIRSA (the day before departure), so it would have been preferable if activities were locked in 2-3 weeks in advance.
- Allocating more time for tour visits would have been ideal as some days felt rushed. One grower mentioned 'Allowing more time for the tour visits would have also made it more enjoyable and not too much of a rush.'

South Australian Participant List

	Title	Name	Position	Organisation
1	Hon	Leon Bignell MP	Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	South Australian Government
2	Ms	Alexandra Keen	Ministerial Adviser	South Australian Government
3	Mr	Sean Sloan	Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy	Primary Industries and Regions SA
4	Mr	Pasquali Scalzi OAM	Managing Director	Scalzi Produce
5	Mr	Tony Ceravolo,	Managing Director	Ceravolo Orchards
6	Mr	Bryan Robertson	Executive Officer	Hortex Alliance
7	Mr	Hamilton Walker	Owner	Walkers International
8	Mr	Michael Vorrasi	Director	AUSVEG South Australia
9	Mr	Antonio Catanzariti	Owner	A&S Catanzariti
10	Mr	Con Laftsis	Owner	Laftsis Fresh
11	Mr	Tam Ly	Director	4 Ways Fresh
12	Ms	Sharyn Casey	Portfolio Manager – Education, Training and Leadership	Horticulture Innovation Australia
13	Mr	Steve Razdan	Economist	AUSVEG
Kubo visit only:				
14	Hon	Geoff Brock MP	Minister for Regional Development	South Australian Government
15	Mr	Richard Lower	Ministerial Adviser	South Australian Government
16	Mr	Trent Mader	Executive Director, Regions SA	Primary Industries and Regions SA

NETHERLANDS EXPORT COMBINATION CONTACT

NAME	POSITION	CONTACT
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Becky Houston	Manager – Market Development	Mob: +61 (0) 407 734 052 becky.houston@sa.gov.au
Hamish Gordon	Horticulture Account Manager	Mob: +61 (0) 409 545 699 Hamish.gordon@sa.gov.au