

**Developing the Vegetable
Industry communication
network in Western
Australia**

David Ellement

Vegetable Growers Association of
WA Inc

Project Number: VG98111

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**Facilitating the development of the
Vegetable Industry
Communication Network in
Western Australia**

Project Number: VG98111
(1st June 2004)

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VG98111

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Media Summary

As a result of vegetable industry and government initiatives a vegetable levy was introduced to fund research and development within the vegetable industry. To facilitate this process Industry Development Officers (IDO) were appointed in each state. Their role is to assess growers' needs in order to facilitate industry driven research projects and to disseminate the resultant research information to all stakeholders.

The initiation of the IDO project in Western Australia (WA) was aimed at facilitating the establishment of a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, Western Australian Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies within WA.

The WA IDO was appointed in November 1999. One of the primary tasks was the development of a comprehensive database through a process of consultation and review with stakeholders in the Western Australian vegetable industry. The data base was refined by the IDO to include current vegetable growers, details of their crops and research requirements. Other stakeholders were incorporated into the database at a later date. Throughout this process growers were encouraged to develop an understanding of the way vegetable levies worked for them and the vegetable industry. Information about how research and development projects were funded, and how the resulting research information could be communicated to the relevant key stakeholders was explored. Based on this consultation process a number of effective, and industry acceptable, communication strategies were trialled and implemented.

An independent review of the WA IDO indicated a broad understanding of the vegetable levy and how it works for growers. Respondents expressed an appreciation of the IDO's role as an organised universal point of contact and communication across the breadth of the industry.

Five years on the IDO project has provided the grease to move the wheels of change in an industry that is grounded in self-reliance and driven by supply and demand. By accessing R&D information through the IDO growers are looking beyond the farm gate to improve efficiency and production. The development of universal and comprehensive communication networks that continue to grow with the industry are vital if the Australian vegetable industry's vision of an industry that is cohesive, market focused, profitable, environmentally responsible, and positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry, with a reputation for quality is to be achieved.

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	1
2.0 Technology Transfer strategy and methodology/ activities.....	2
2.1 Initial Stage	2
2.1.1 Background	2
2.1.2 Setting up	2
2.1.3 Developing and managing processes to understand the issues, and needs of vegetable growers.	2
2.2 The Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer	4
2.3 Communication actions/activities.....	5
2.3.1 WA Vegetable Industry Database.....	5
2.3.2 WA VegeLINK Newsletter.....	7
2.3.3 WA VegeNEWS (email service)	8
2.3.4 FAX service	8
2.3.5 Individual growers visits.....	8
2.3.6 Meetings.....	8
2.3.7 Mail Outs	9
2.3.10 Other communication forms	9
2.4 Meetings with Stakeholders.....	9
2.4.1 Grower Meetings	9
2.4.2 Researcher extension meetings	9
2.4.3 Grower speciality groups	9
2.4.4. Industry Research and Development Representatives.....	10
2.4.5 Develop national extension program with AUSVEG and IDO network....	10
2.5 Information Resources	10
2.5.1 IDO Professional Development	10
2.5.2 Development of Resources	10
3.0 Evaluation and measurement of outcomes – impact and adoption.....	11
3.1 Outcomes Communication actions/activities.....	11
3.1.1 WA Vegetable Industry Database.....	12
3.1.2 WA VegeLINK Newsletter.....	12
3.1.3 WA VegeNEWS (email).....	12
3.1.4 FAX service	12
3.1.5 Individual growers visits.....	12
3.1.6 Mail-Outs	13
3.2. Meetings with Stakeholders.....	13
3.2.1 Meetings with growers/commodity groups	13
3.2.2 Meetings with the WA Management Committee	13
3.2.3 Industry Research and Development Representatives.....	14
3.3 Information Resources	14
3.3.1 IDO Professional Development	14
3.4 Independent Evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications of the WA IDO.	15
3.4.1 Exposure to key technology transfer methods.....	15
3.4.2 Understanding of key issues	15
3.4.3. Overall effectiveness of communications of development officer	15
3.4.4 Recommendations and suggested improvements.	15
3.3.6. Summary of Evaluation Findings	15

4.0 Discussion	16
5.0 Recommendations	18
6.0 Acknowledgments.....	19
7.0 Bibliography	19
8.0 Appendix.....	20
APPENDIX 1 Work Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer	21
APPENDIX 2 Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer	33
APPENDIX 3 Feedback Form.....	44
APPENDIX 4 WA VegeNEWS email example.....	45

1.0 Introduction

The vision statement set out in the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan states: *The Australian Vegetable Industry will be cohesive, market focussed, profitable and environmentally responsible; positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry, with a reputation for quality.* One of the key goals for achieving this is to: *improve the communication and collaboration within industry.*

Industry Development Officers have been used to improve communication, and conduct development projects across a broad range of primary production industries. Research on the effectiveness of 33 IDO's funded by the Horticulture Australia Ltd (previously HRDC) found that they are highly valued as facilitators and project officers (Van Beek, 1998). Thus there was a precedence the establishment of the Vegetable Industry Development Officer (IDO) Project to progress the aims espoused in the vision statement above. Accordingly six state based IDO's were employed in acknowledgement of varying states needs. It was envisioned that these state IDO's would take on national responsibilities and maintain regular contact between states thus creating a national IDO network.

The overarching role of the vegetable IDO is to develop an efficient and effective industry communication network, in order to facilitate the exchange of information, within the Vegetable Industry, to maximize the benefits from industry driven research and development outcomes. Their role is that of a knowledge broker, and information and industry learning facilitator. The IDO role has the long term interests of the grower as a priority (Coutts, Bell, & James, 2003)

In Western Australia (WA) the WA Vegetable Growers Association (WA VGA) was responsible for the recruitment of the IDO and provides ongoing direction and management. The initiation of the IDO project in Western Australia (WA) was aimed at facilitating the establishment of a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies within Western Australia.

The WA IDO project was a new initiative for the WA vegetable industry, there was no history of any professional position within the vegetable industry. The appointment of the WA IDO in November 1999 heralded the commencement of the IDO Project in WA.

2.0 Technology Transfer strategy and methodology/ activities

2.1 Initial Stage

2.1.1 Background

The WA IDO confronted a number of challenges in the newly created position. Arguably the most significant challenge was the development of an efficient, effective and inclusive communication network involving as many of the vegetable industry stakeholders as possible. Historically stakeholders in the vegetable industry communicated through informal networks based on supply of goods and services, sale of produce and geographical location. There were a number of factors that maintained this. First, research and development information was generally provided to individual vegetable growers at their request on the farm by officers of the WA Department of Agriculture or growers talked to other growers through informal networks. Second, growers often conducted their own research and development on the farm to gain a competitive edge in a market largely driven by supply and demand. Thus their learning, and problem solving was inward focused. Third, the WA vegetable industry was largely family based, and ethnically diverse. These combined with the pioneering efforts of many vegetable growers engendered independence, autonomy and self reliance. Fourth, these small business owners were in charge of most aspects of their small business with little direct government regulation or intervention. Finally, the natural barriers of distance between vegetable properties across a vast state (prior to the advent of new technologies) made communication difficult. Consequently, there was limited opportunity for producers to develop a sense of a cohesive and collective identity as vegetable growers in a thriving primary production industry. Rather the vegetable industry culture was one of self-reliance.

These historical issues needed to be acknowledged and considered during the process of developing an initial work plan to progress the project. Goals need to be realistic and achievable in recognition that cultural change is a gradual process (Matsumoto, 1996).

2.1.2 Setting up

The first priority was the establishment of an office, administrative support, and organising communication technologies suitable to achieve the aims of the project. The IDO also needed to work with a representative of the Management Committee to establish realistic and meaningful aims within the framework of AUSVEG vision statement and determine the best methods to establish a profile and credibility within the vegetable industry. The process was assisted by the IDO's family's history as vegetable growers.

2.1.3 Developing and managing processes to understand the issues, and needs of vegetable growers.

The first aim was to inform growers and stakeholders in the vegetable industry of the IDO position and encouraged to ownership of the project. Stakeholders needed to be informed of the existence of the IDO position, its extent and limitations. Reaching

“grass root” vegetable growers, who are often busy doing the “hands-on” farm work and traditionally don’t attend organised grower meetings en masse, was the first objective of the project.

The IDO began by visiting growers on their farms and listening to their opinions, needs and concerns in relation to the changes that were being implemented and promoting the uptake of new technologies. By inviting comment through farm visits, and as the project developed some momentum, advertised grower meetings across the vegetable producing regions, all growers had the opportunity to begin to interact with the IDO. This personal approach was consistent with the vegetable industry culture and the needs analysis process acknowledged that growers were experts in relation to their own businesses. The role of IDO, for the first time, provided an organised universal point of contact and communication across the breadth of the industry and began the process of unifying an industry characterised by independent thinkers.

The initial consultative process was based on a qualitative action research model with ongoing feedback informing the process. The action research approach is a flexible and evolving research tool that leads to practical applications and solutions to real life situations (Reber, 1985).

While these meeting were costly in terms of time the initial face to face meetings fed into vegetable growers informal communication networks and helped to lay the foundations for the introduction of the WA IDO. For many grass root growers the IDO became the face of the changes wrought by the introduction of the vegetable levy.

During the first two years of the project work a number of activities and strategies were trialled. During this process the IDO continued to develop a greater understanding of the vegetable industry culture and educated stakeholders about the role of the IDO. This complementary process allowed the IDO to adapt to the communication styles and requirements of the vegetable industry and determine the most suitable approaches for each stakeholder target group. This knowledge base, and the growing awareness of growers’ needs, generated the development of the initial Work Plan and subsequent updated versions every six months (refer to appendix 1). Consistent with the principles suggested in the Review of the IDO Network (2003), the Work Plan aims were broken down into specific objectives and related activities. The development of Work Plan provided a framework to assist in the process of continually improving the IDO’s performance and refining activities and their priorities. The Work Plan was developed in conjunction with the Management Committee, and provided the impetuosity to progress the project.

Under the umbrella of the Horticulture Australia Ltd, and with consideration of the goals for IDO’s outlined in the HRDC Manual (2000) the Management Committee, developed seven objectives of the WA IDO Project. These being:

- 1. To work closely with the Western Australia’s Vegetable Industry Research & Development Commodity Group Members to ensure that projects undertaken by Western Australian research and development providers align with overall*

priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry.

2. *To maintain a database of vegetable growers and industry personnel and seek to improve the methods of message delivery to the target audience. The database to provide details that will allow relevant information to be targeted to industry participants.*
3. *To work within the guidelines of the Western Australian vegetable industry strategic plan (developed by CORREH Consultants), also having regard for the national vegetable industry strategic plan and with particular attention to the formulation and implementation of further development strategies for the Western Australian industry.*
4. *To organise, facilitate and manage, as required, workshops, seminars, meetings and events which will contribute to the transfer of R&D results and contribute to the progress of the Western Australian vegetable industry.*
5. *To monitor and assess the effectiveness, over time, of all Western Australian and relevant National projects and report to the stakeholders.*
6. *To communicate to industry through newsletters, emails, mail outs and other targeted media relevant information pertaining to the levy, research activities and information significant to the Western Australian vegetable industry.*
7. *To work with the AUSVEG National R&D Export Group to ensure that projects undertaken by research and development providers align with priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry.*

The Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan acknowledged that one of the key goals to the achievement of the IDO Project was the “improvement of the communication and collaboration within the vegetable industry”. The achievement of the objectives of the IDO project are predicated on the existence of a flexible, interactive and responsive communication network. In recognition of this key element of the project, and to identify specific objectives and measurable outcomes, the Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable IDO was developed (refer to appendix 2). The Communication Plan directly addressed some of the aims of the WA IDO Project (i.e. 2, 4 & 6) and facilitated the achievement of the remaining four.

2.2 The Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer

The key broad aims outlined in the WA IDO communication plan are:

- *Increase understanding of Stakeholders of the levy collection and funding process,*
- *Increase and improve access to information,*
- *Enable Stakeholders to better utilise and manage information, and*
- *Enhance communication capabilities within the industry.*

These aims were broken down into objective six key measurable outcomes:

1. *To be communicating with 20% of WA Vegetable growers and industry electronically*

2. *Increase growing details (crops grown, areas of interest, contact details, etc) of WA Vegetable growers to 60% on the WA Vegetable Industry database*
3. *Increase adoption of new techniques recommended by research projects*
4. *Increase number of quality issues presented by industry to the WA Commodity R&D Group.*
5. *Greater participation rates of key stakeholders*
6. *Increased R&D and project inquiries by industry*

To achieve objectives one, two, four, five and six a wide range of communication options were researched and the most effective for the Western Australian vegetable industry were considered in terms of suitability in relation to geographical area, technological knowledge and technological accessibility, vegetable industry cultural mores, and growers willingness to be open to innovative technology. The consideration and application of a variety of communication methods in different modalities maximises effective communication of new ideas and relevant information (McKay, Davis & Fanning, 1995). It was determined that a number of strategies would be trialled. Networking with the inter-state IDO's, who were appointed earlier than the WA IDO, and therefore had knowledge of communication strategies and their effectiveness assisted this process.

The WA IDO officer implemented the most appropriate strategies, and consistent with an action research approach the process of implementation and review of these actions have been carried out over the last three years.

2.3 Communication actions/activities

The communication action/activities and the methodological processes by which they were developed, implemented and adjusted to suit the requirements of the WA vegetable industry are presented below.

2.3.1 WA Vegetable Industry Database

The WA vegetable industry had minimal tools to communicate with growers at the inception of the WA IDO project. There were three grower associations that each had a small membership base and only worked for their members, the WA Department of Agriculture had been going through a change in focus with less extension staff with no central grower database, the markets did not have a central database (all communication was through market agents), and the main method of communication was through word of mouth through resales, agents and between growers. Stakeholders with information used it a business tool and misinformation was common in all areas of the industry. This highlighted the need for new communication channels to be developed and a comprehensive database was an automatic requirement for the most cost effective communication channels.

The initial motivation for the WA vegetable industry database was so that all growers could be contacted and informed without misinformation hampering the WA IDO project. The focus on addressing misinformation allowed the project to develop credibility in the industry in a relevant short period of time because most information was consistent and regular. This was an important aspect in the initial communication activities as the industry is relationship and family based and positive image was

critical in being able to be a change agent for the industry. Over the course of the project numerous other advantages were found as the database was developed.

Database developmental process

The WA Vegetable Industry Database was developed over a series of stages so that outcomes could be achieved quickly. This allowed for the rapid development of an effective communication tool. The database was initially supplied by the WA Vegetable Growers Association. The WA IDO worked with the association to develop the database into a powerful tool for the Western Australian vegetable industry.

Stage 1 – Simple grower details

The initial database development, stage 1, focused on obtaining WA vegetable growers' addresses and one contact number. This was achieved over a twelve month period with the support of the WA Vegetable Growers Association, WA Department of Agriculture, Perth Market Authority, market agents, exporters, WA Department of Environment, industry leaders and rural suppliers. Stakeholders in the vegetable industry were keen to assist in development of the database because most were frustrated with misinformation and the lack of any details for the vegetable industry including number of growers, distribution of growers and industry trends. It was found that nearly all these sources of grower information were limited to the growers address and phone details. This was identified as a gap in the industry communication tools.

The WA Vegetable Growers Association (WA VGA) database provided a starting point to develop a comprehensive industry database. At this stage growers had little knowledge of the IDO and were reluctant to provide their contact details. Accordingly, step one involved collecting contact information with minimal quality controls.

A simple database was designed so that the information from multiple sources could be easily imputed and scrutinised. The WA IDO began to review the entries and remove inactive vegetable growers. This process was completed by the end of the first year of the project.

The development of a data base generated numerous requests to access growers through the data base. The question of information overload became an issue. This led to a review of the relevance of the information being sent to growers.

Stage 2 – Comprehensive grower details

Taking the database from a contact source to an information tool was an important developmental step. However, the greater the scope of information recorded the greater potential for information on the data base to become obsolete. There is the potential for growers to miss important information or be sent irrelevant information.

To maximise the reliability of the data base two activities were employed to maintain the relevance of the data base. First, once a year growers are sent an information sheet that requests their database details and feedback (refer to appendix 3). This action not only maintains the relevance of the database, it identifies the response rate of growers to this technology. Second, an independent follow-up to all growers is conducted by phone. This is a cost effective way of updating the information with a high degree of

accuracy. The phone contact verifies the database, updates details, allows for extra information to be gathered and provides an opportunity for the grower to express any concerns he/she may have.

Stage 3 – Integration of industry services (capabilities)

The data collected is organised by a database program developed by Potato IDM, Leigh Walters. This program is used by all vegetable IDOs thus providing consistent data collecting across all states.

The custom database program provides for the collection of grower contact details, areas of interest, crops produced and crop groups. The database has the capacity to send emails to growers directly or through other email programs, fax to growers and merge information into documents.

Stage 4 – Stakeholder details

To encourage the informal exchange of information throughout the vegetable industry organisations and individuals involved in providing services to vegetable growers were included in the database. This allowed information of direct pertinence to stakeholders in the vegetable industry to be communicated directly to them.

2.3.2 WA VegeLINK Newsletter

Feedback from the vegetable IDO network indicated the value of the development of a newsletter with direct relevance to vegetable industry stakeholders.

An example newsletter was produced and feedback was sought from the management committee, and from growers and other stakeholders. Growers indicated that they were inundated with information and junk mail. Therefore, a newsletter could get lost in the deluge of advertising pamphlets and information sent to growers. They suggested that combining the newsletter in the WA Grower magazine would ensure it would not be discarded.

The WA Grower was seen as a good vehicle because it was recognised and accepted in the industry and as a result was not readily discarded as junk mail. The WA VegeLINK newsletter became an attached insert into the middle of the WA Grower magazine. Other results were established infrastructure and wide established distribution.

To maintain grower interest feedback indicated that the magazine needed to have a local favour and present information in a format that would allow them to make a decision regarding its relevance to their business as well as how to access that information if required. Growers also wanted to know what research was being conducted on crops that they current don't grow so they can obtain a big picture idea for research that may interest them in the future.

The newsletter is distributed to all vegetable growers in WA and other stakeholders in Western Australia quarterly and is presented in a high quality full colour format.

2.3.3 WA VegeNEWS (email service)

The development of an email service was identified as a priority because of it is an inexpensive communication tool that allows for the rapid exchange of information. An initial trial was soon extended to include all stakeholders in the industry. The data base provided growers' email addresses. Information is generally sent under the title of WA VegeNEWS.

2.3.4 FAX service

Ongoing surveys indicated that 21% of grower preferred information by fax. Accordingly a fax service was developed trialled with the WA Greenhouse group which represented 8% over the number of growers in the industry.

Feedback from growers that participated in the trial indicated that this method of communication was ineffective. The length of time required managing the service, use of resources and the error rate of delivery (eg fax machine not in working order) made the process cumbersome. It has limited value as a mass communication tool although it is still used to communicate with growers that preferred this method of receiving information. It is also used when information is limited to one page or less.

2.3.5 Individual growers visits

Historically there was an established culture of face to face on farm meetings. This was the form of communication preferred by growers and remains popular with all growers. Initially in the first year of the project farm visits were considered a priority and provided an opportunity for the IDO to introduce himself to growers, educate them about the vegetable levy and R&D and conduct a needs analysis. This provided a base for many of the future plans throughout the project. This also provided a platform to introduce new forms of communication to the industry.

In the second and third years of the project farm visits were reduced because it was perceived they were not cost effective. More recently feedback from growers has supported the return of farm visits because it provides the catalyst for the activation of informal communication networks. In response to industry feedback the IDO allots 15 to 20% of his time to maintaining farm visits thus feeding into the informal communication network.

2.3.6 Meetings

Meetings with growers and stakeholders were advertised using the communication channels developed by the project. The general process is to put a notification into the WA VegeLINK newsletter, mail a meeting invitation two weeks before the scheduled meeting, send a notice of meeting through WA VegeNEWS email service and finally send a reminder email 2 days before the event. If the meeting is of high importance a fax is sent to growers that rated fax communication as the preferred method of communication 1 day before the event.

As a general rule meetings are better attended if they are scheduled at night and in the growers' region. Initially food and drinks were provided however this generally does not affect attendance in most regions.

The vast distances to some grower regions (i.e. from Kununurra, in the North of WA, to Albany in the South) and the time required to travel to some regions necessitates careful planning to maximise efficiency.

2.3.7 Mail Outs

Initially general mail outs were used extensively. This proved to be costly and grower feedback suggested that over reliance on this form of communication was not efficient. In response the IDO developed a targeted communication service based on information relevant to the grower or stakeholder. This information was obtained from the database. The IDO determines which groups receive the information available depending on factors including region, crop production, crop groups and areas of interest. Targeted mail-outs remain an important communication tool.

2.3.10 Other communication forms

The IDO surveyed vegetable growers regarding the development of website. Feedback suggested that a vegetable industry website would need to be regularly updated. At the present time it was considered that the level of expression of interest did not warrant the development of a web site. This may be a project that needs to be developed nationally.

2.4 Meetings with Stakeholders

2.4.1 Grower Meetings

Grower meetings are organised through an industry leader in the region to be visited. They are primarily a communication tool to allow two way exchange of information. This form of communication is suitable to a select group of growers based on attendance records which indicate that the same group attend organised meetings.

External immediate factors affect attendance for example the weather, time of meeting, break downs on farm, staff problems, etc.

2.4.2 Researcher extension meetings

Meetings to discuss research issues and research findings are generally instigated by researchers who wish to target growers who will benefit from their research. The IDO contact researchers to obtain information regarding the research and its progression. From these discussions the IDO organises growers meetings and field days to promote the researchers findings.

2.4.3 Grower speciality groups

It was identified that speciality groups had particular interests that need to be addressed within house. These groups are made up of organised representatives who maintain communication networks with growers with common interests. These groups include the Carrot Association for Research and Development (CARD), the Warren

Cauliflower Group and the WA Greenhouse group. The IDO works with these groups to assist in communication, identify research issues, develop strategic plans and facilitate effective outcomes.

2.4.4. Industry Research and Development Representatives

The IDO meets regularly with the state and national commodity groups. The commodity group members access information and knowledge gained by the IDO on industry needs, grass root grower opinions, researcher projects, government direction, market forces and industry direction.

The IDO works with the R&D members to determine the needs of vegetable growers and what is strategically important for the development of the industry in WA. This provides an opportunity for the IDO to communicate growers' needs from a general perspective.

2.4.5 Develop national extension program with AUSVEG and IDO network

The IDO communicates with interstate IDO's regularly by phone and email. Meetings are arranged as required generally four times per year. The importance of networking to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the IDO role was recognised in a review of the IDO network in 2003.

2.5 Information Resources

An important component of the communication plan was the collection of resource materials for stakeholders and the up skilling of the WA IDO.

2.5.1 IDO Professional Development

The IDO requires an extensive knowledge of the vegetable industry, its structures and services, state of the development, and how the introduction of the vegetable levy impacted on the existing services and structures. It is recognised that the IDO needs to maintain a current knowledge of research and development information and the trends, internationally, nationally and locally.

2.5.2 Development of Resources

The IDO has the responsibility for identifying, collecting and collating information that may be helpful to the IDO position and to stakeholders in the vegetable industry.

3.0 Evaluation and measurement of outcomes – impact and adoption

As mentioned above assessment of this project was largely based on a qualitative action research model. Thus, as the IDO developed communication networks, was increasingly recognised as a point of contact and liaison within the industry, and expanded his knowledge base, he adjusted his methods to suit the needs of the industry. Clearly, the immediate need to develop effective communication strategies, to gain credibility and acceptance in the industry, the requirement to conduct needs analysis, and later, to disseminate research precluded a more lengthy quantitative approach. Nevertheless, some objective measures were obtained.

Consistent with the goals outlined in the Communication Plan the target of communicating with 20% of growers electronically was reached and exceeded. Over 40% of growers are currently in regular electronic communication with the IDO.

The second goal identified obtaining 60% of details of growers and their produce. This was achieved and, in fact, all growers' details are now part of a comprehensive data base.

3.1 Outcomes Communication actions/activities

A number of communication methods and tools were trialled. A summary of the effectiveness of those adopted is discussed below. Table 1 displays the communication activities carried out by the WA IDO over a twelve month period.

Distribution of VegeLINK Newsletter	Quarterly
WA VegeNEWS email service	Fortnightly
Grower Group Meetings	Fortnightly to monthly
State Grower Regional Visits (11 Regions)	Each region: 0.5 to 4 times per year
Facilitation of Research workshops and field days	Monthly to bimonthly
Mail outs	Fortnightly to monthly
Face-to face farm visits	Weekly to fortnightly
National Strategy and R&D Meetings	Six
State R&D Committees meetings	Three
Conferences and information seminars (National and State)	Eight
WA Vegetable Growers Association meetings	Monthly
Meeting with government departments and other organisations	Weekly

Table 1: WA IDO Communication Actions 2004

3.1.1 WA Vegetable Industry Database

The IDO has been effective in creating a current, comprehensive and detailed data base. This data base is an integrated communication tool that allows communication of target groups and accurate measure of industry trends and the status of the vegetable industry. The process of updating yearly has led to the realisation that the vegetable industry is going through a rationalisation period with medium size farms either upsizing or closing down. Information from the data base indicates that 50% of this decline in grower numbers is due to urban sprawl.

The success of the database as a tool for communication is measured by the ability to target information to growers based on their identified needs across a range of communication modes (eg email, mail-outs, fax etc) and its ability to reach all growers. The comprehensiveness of the data base has been recognised by stakeholders in the industry. For example the Department of Agriculture WA access this resource on a cost recovery basis.

3.1.2 WA VegeLINK Newsletter

The success of the WA VegeLINK newsletter is determined in a number of ways. These include grower feedback, requests by researchers to include research reports, and commercial companies requesting advertising space. All these indicate that stakeholders recognise WA VegeLINK is a vehicle to reach vegetable growers. Growers often contact the IDO with requests for additional information after reading the WA VegeLINK. The initial decision to seek growers' feedback on the presentation of newsletter and the resultant implementation of their expressed preferences has maximised the potential for the newsletter to reach the target audience.

3.1.3 WA VegeNEWS (email)

The introduction of the email service heralded a shift in communication strategies. While this method of communication was not suitable for all growers it is increasingly the preferred form of communication embraced by industry and the investment of resources to develop uptake of this service was warranted. Consequently, the IDO promoted the use of email to growers and other stakeholders. The IDO's objective was to reach 20% of growers through the email service. This target was exceeded with 40% of the industry utilising email. This identified group are more likely to embrace other innovative technologies.

3.1.4 FAX service

The Fax service is used in moderation to communicate urgent or brief news. However, it continues to be used to communicate with those who have expressed a preference for this form of communication exchange.

3.1.5 Individual growers visits

Initially the IDO dedicated 25% of his time to face to face grower meetings. In the mid-term of the project this was deemed to be an expensive and time consuming activity. In the last year the IDO has resumed farm visits because of the flow on effect

through the growers' informal communication networks. For example the IDO visited Carnarvon and spoke to growers and on a later visit to Albany was asked questions related to information he had disseminated face to face in Carnarvon. Strategic on-farm interaction also ensures the IDO gain a better understanding of the issues and needs impacting on growers (Coutts, Bell & James, 2003). This may be necessary in reaching some growers. Feedback from growers indicates that this is the preferred means of communication (Evaluation report, 2004).

3.1.6 Mail-Outs

As a rule, the IDO organises mail-outs approximately fortnightly. These target **all** growers in the state. It is one of two forms which are used to reach every grower. The other is the WA VegeLink newsletter.

Generally there are two types of info provided; one being R&D information and the other information updates (notice of meetings, database updates etc.).

3.2. Meetings with Stakeholders

3.2.1 Meetings with growers/commodity groups

The IDO organises and attends approximately 20 meetings with growers and other stakeholders annually. Generally growers familiar with this form of communication attend regularly. To enhance the relevance of these meetings to growers the IDO invites growers to present relevant material. While this remains an important form of communicating information regarding the IDO project and R&D information reliance on meetings would limit the exchange of information. Nevertheless growers and researchers indicate field days and meetings are a useful tool.

The IDO also meets regularly with the state and national commodity groups. The commodity group members access information and knowledge gained by the IDO on industry needs, grass root grower opinions, researcher projects, government direction, market forces and industry direction.

The IDO works with the R&D members to determine the needs of vegetable growers and what is strategically important for the development of the industry in WA. This provides an opportunity for the IDO to communicate growers' needs from a general perspective.

To further facilitate access to information the IDO has organised regional and specialty representatives. This encourages growers to access information through other growers.

3.2.2 Meetings with the WA Management Committee

The IDO meets with members of the Management Committee (MC) on a regular basis. The MC provides objectives and performance indicators for the WA IDO. A sound working relationship is essential to the achieving the objectives of the WA IDO project. A review of the IDO Network (2003) involving phone interviews with the

WA Management Committee reported that they referred to their IDO as “godsend”. The reviewers went on to state “The introduction of the IDO was seen as revolutionising communication in the vegetable industry. Excellent networking and communication of the IDO was seen to contribute to this effectiveness with his background of farming, management and science, enhancing the position. The positive feedback of researcher and industry leaders was also seen as a contributor to effectiveness, with the national IDO network being a valuable support” (p. 24).

3.2.3 Industry Research and Development Representatives

Nationally the IDO facilitates the Export commodity and supply chain groups to assist them to ensure that projects undertaken by research and development providers align with priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry. This is achieved by facilitating the national meetings, providing pertinent and requested information and communicating with the delegates to ensure they are prepared for the national meetings.

The IDO also works with the R&D members to determine the needs of vegetable growers and what is strategically important for the development of the industry in WA. This provides an opportunity for the IDO to communicate growers’ needs from a general perspective.

3.3 Information Resources

The IDO acts a bridge between grass root growers, grower groups, R&D delegates, researchers and other stake holders. It is crucial for the IDO to be able to manage information and knowledge so that information can be readily accessed. The numerous interactions with stakeholders in the industry create opportunities for the exchange of information. For example, the IDO linked nurseries with researchers concerning lettuce big vein, growers with chemical information and growers with new nutritional programs.

The IDO is also in a position to identifying the current and future trends and opportunities and engaging researchers and other organisations to progress and support industry. The initiatives may not necessarily arise from the vegetable levy funding. For example the IDO is involved in talks with consultant associated with the WA Premiers Water Foundation. This project will have direct benefits for the sustainability and profitability of the vegetable industry.

3.3.1 IDO Professional Development

Most of the IDO’s knowledge is gained through meetings with researchers, industry leaders, seminars, conferences, national IDO network, reading reports, field days, and grower meetings.

The IDO in the industry is a conduit for information and knowledge, thus most stake holders actively exchange information and knowledge with the IDO. This is demonstrated by the number of requests the IDO receives to attend meetings organised by retailers, seedling nurseries, government agencies and rural suppliers).

3.4 Independent Evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications of the WA IDO.

In June 2004, an independent evaluation was carried out by Business Today for the WA Vegetable Growers Association under the direction of the IDO management committee with advise from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) in June 2004. Telephone surveys of a representative sample of key stakeholders were conducted. They investigated four keys areas. The findings from the survey are discussed below.

3.4.1 Exposure to key technology transfer methods

The survey results to this key area suggested growers continue to appreciate face to face contact and that this form of communication is meaningful and practical. An earlier national survey conducted in 2003 supported the view that growers respond well to on-farm face to face meetings. All respondents indicated that they receive “more than sufficient correspondence”.

3.4.2 Understanding of key issues

All respondents demonstrated some understanding of the ways vegetable levies are invested and a reasonable understanding of the R&D process. There were indications that this appreciation was a consequence of the IDO role. The importance of the IDO as a communicator was acknowledged by respondents with comments such as “I used to think that it was a big waste of money, but now I understand the relevance of the investment to me. David does a very good job and I don’t mind contributing to this”.

Respondents overall were accepting of the research and development work performed by the industry and generally stakeholders thought it was a good investment.

3.4.3. Overall effectiveness of communications of development officer

Respondents rated the IDO’s general performance on this key area very highly. Comments on his effectiveness included:

“The employment of the IDO is just what the industry needed.”

“He is a diligent communicator and this is what is required with some of the growers”.

“I congratulate him; he has come along way and taken the industry with him”.

3.4.4 Recommendations and suggested improvements.

The respondents complained that research reports should be available at a lower cost. Other recommendations included maintaining face to face contact, and the use of ABC Country Hour as a communication tool.

3.3.6. Summary of Evaluation Findings

The research indicated acceptance of the IDO was high with all stakeholders surveyed considering the role of IDO as a positive direction for the industry. There was a high level of communication to growers and support for ongoing face to face contact which was seen by growers as important for information exchange.

4.0 Discussion

After completion of five years of the WA IDO project what has changed in the Western Australian vegetable industry? There have been widespread changes that have influenced the WA IDO's role and vegetable growers' sustainability and profitability. These include the following:

- The reduction of numbers of vegetable growers largely due to urbanisation and the retirement
- A greater number of large growers who have the capacity to dominate the industry.
- The introduction of GST.
- The greater involvement government around the management of water resources and nutrients, legislation controlling the use of fowl manure, and storage of fertilisers.
- Greater emphasis on quality assurance and environmental issues.
- And the introduction of the WA IDO Project.

These are a few of many changes that continue to impact on the vegetable industry today. It is difficult to quantify how effective the WA IDO position has been, as a change agent, a knowledge broker and industry learning facilitator. This has been acknowledged in earlier reviews and yet there are some clear indicators of change. The introduction of an email service, which in its infancy was used by 10% of growers, is now being regularly use by over 40% of growers. For the first time there is a comprehensive data base with up-to-date grower details, including crop details. This allows the targeting of information to growers and is consistent with the second key objective of the National IDO Project. The value of this data base is evidenced by the number of requests the IDO has received to access this resource.

The ability to contact all vegetable growers through the data base enables the dissemination of information to all growers and by its very development begins the process of unifying the industry. With increasing demands on growers, wrought by the changes outlined above, the grass root grower needs to be able to access a neutral, knowledgeable broker with the long term interests of the grower as a priority. To facilitate this process the WA IDO has trialled, and subsequently introduced, a number of communication strategies to reach growers across all regions of the state. This has been identified as a key objective and is a recognition of the need for a flexible communication network to inform and educate growers about the levy, research activities and information significant to the Western Australian vegetable industry.

Growers are readily contacting the WA IDO for R&D information and to discuss concerns, a further indication of the acceptance of his role in the vegetable industry. Recognition of the IDO, as a knowledge broker, is also evidenced by the number of requests the IDO receives to sit on vegetable industry and Government committees.

With the assistance of the WA VGA the WA IDO has organised and facilitated workshops, field days and seminars to disseminate the R&D results and educate

growers and stakeholders about the long term benefits of the vegetable levy. This is consistent with objective three of the National IDO Project.

A review (2003) stated that the vegetable IDO positions are effective and valuable positions within the total R&D system within the Australian Vegetable Industry and should be retained and strongly supported. Similarly, an independent review of the WA IDO (2004) indicated acceptance of the IDO was high with all stakeholders surveyed considering the role of IDO as a positive direction for the industry. There was a high level of communication to growers and support for ongoing face to face contact which was seen by growers as important for information exchange.

This suggests the process of change has commenced towards achieving the vision of the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan which states: *The Australian Vegetable Industry will be cohesive, market focussed, profitable and environmentally responsible; positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry, with a reputation for quality.* In order to compete as a serious player the vegetable industry needs to develop a professional and responsible image. The appointment of the IDO is a step towards achieving this.

5.0 Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to the continual publicising of the activities and achievements of the IDO project within the industry. This will assist in maintaining industry support and educate growers regarding the roles of the WA IDO.
- Consideration should be given to increasing efforts to targeting research information to growers who can directly benefit from the latest technologies.
- A catalogue should be developed of the resources of the materials available to growers and stakeholders. This would enable ready access. This project may be contracted out.
- Ensure the service provided by the WA IDO works in conjunction with the national system and reflects the hierarchical structure of the vegetable industry.
- Consideration should be given to setting realistic goals, taking into account the cultural environment and the limitations of the IDO network in terms of time and resources.
- Consideration should be given for the IDO to work closely with the WA VGA as it is an advantage to have an industry body that works closely with growers supporting the R&D process and IDO project.

6.0 Acknowledgments

- WA vegetable growers and industry for their ongoing support.
- The WA Vegetable Growers Association, executive and staff for their guidance and support.
- The WA IDO Management committee for the provision of supervision and direction in a supportive manner.
- The National IDO Network for providing camaraderie, understanding and a sense of cohesive national working environment.
- The WA Department of Agriculture for their support of the industry and the WA IDO position
- Horticulture Australia Limited staff for their assistance, understanding and support of the IDO role.
- AUSVEG for their support in coordinating a national program that assists the IDO role.

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8.0 Appendix

1	Work Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer
2	Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer
3	Feedback form
4	WA VegeNEWS email example

**Work Plan
for the Western Australian
Vegetable Industry Development Officer**

Work Plan	Due Date	Communication Plan
1 Project Establishment	31/08/1998	
2 Industry contacts established	9/03/1999	
3 Regional information exchange	1/09/1999	
4 Regular Newsletter established	1/05/2000	
5 Strategic Workshops planned	1/11/2000	
6 HAL Final report library	1/05/2001	
7 Regular Electronic communication established	1/02/2002	
8 Communication plan	1/05/2002	
9 Strategic & Work plan	1/01/2003	
10 New funding submission	1/05/2003	
11 Final Report	1/01/2004	

WORKPLAN 1

Project Establishment

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Research Agreement Signed	✓	
Project Officer employed	✓	

WORKPLAN 2

Industry contacts established

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
WA Vegetable Industry database with grower contact details compiled	✓	
Grower groups consulted on research priorities	✓	
R&D priority list established	✓	
Communication recommendation outlined and approved by management group	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Review current vegetable funded HRDC projects	✓	

WORKPLAN 3

Regional information exchange

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Grower meetings held in regional areas	✓	
Assisted with planning and meeting of WA Industry to establish the WA Vegetable Industry Strategic plan by CORREH Consultants	✓	
Established quarterly WA Vegetable R&D newsletter called WA VegeLink.	✓	
Developed WA Vegetable Industry database to include grower areas of interest as well as contact details	✓	
R&D information disseminated through region workshops	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Review current vegetable funded HRDC projects	✓	

WORKPLAN 4

Regular Newsletter established

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Established quarterly WA Vegetable R&D newsletter called WA VegeLink.	✓ Copies Available	
Management group review of IDO project	✓	
Grower meetings held in regional areas	✓	
Developed WA Vegetable Industry database to include industry contacts as well as grower areas of interest and contact details	✓	
R&D information disseminated through region workshops	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	

WORKPLAN 5 Strategic Workshops planned

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
'Implementation of outcomes of the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Plan in Western Australia' by CORREH Consultants has been completed. IDO working on outcomes	✓	
WA R&D Commodity Group Delegates briefed on R&D proposals	✓	
Grower groups initiate proposals/projects	✓	
'Targeted Vegetable R&D Communication plan' established to assist in communication activities of WA IDO.	✓ Report Available	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with research direction 2. Plan communication activities 3. Brief R&D delegates and industry 	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓ Copies Available	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	

WORKPLAN 6

HAL Final report library

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
HAL Final report library established	✓	
Electronic communication recommendations acted on and e-mail communication service established	✓	
'Implementation of outcomes of the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Plan in Western Australia' by CORREH Consultants has been completed. IDO working on outcomes	✓	
Submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals	✓	
Research Priority list updated (Nationally)	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓ Copies Available	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required		
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Hold WA IDO meeting	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with research direction 2. Plan communication activities 3. Brief R&D delegates and industry 	✓	

WORKPLAN 7

Regular Electronic communication established

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Regular e-mail communication service established including 'IDO NEWS'	✓	
'Implementation of outcomes of the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Plan in Western Australia' by CORREH Consultants has been completed. IDO working on outcomes	✓	
Communication capabilities draft analysis performed – ' <i>Australian Vegetable Industry Communication Channels</i> '	✓	
Regular 'IDO NEWS' email service	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals		
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓ Copies Available	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with research direction 2. Plan communication activities 3. Brief R&D delegates and industry 	✓	

WORKPLAN 8

Communication plan

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Completed Communication plan for the WA IDO – ‘ <i>Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer</i> ’	✓ Report Available	
Draft Work plan submitted (Work Plan 8 & 9 complete) – ‘ <i>Work Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer</i> ’	✓ Report Available	
Communication capabilities analysis and presented – ‘ <i>Australian Vegetable Industry Communication Channels</i> ’	✓ Report Available	
Industry recommendations for new R&D directions	✓	
New Zealand study tour performed	✓	
Hold Kununurra and Broome grower meetings	✓	
Hold WA IDO meeting	✓	
Export committee objectives - Export strategic plan completed	✓ Report Available	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced – March & June editions	✓ Copies Available	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular ‘IDO NEWS’ email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required		
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Technical Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with research direction 2. Plan communication activities 3. Brief R&D delegates and industry 	✓	

WORKPLAN 9

Strategic & Work Plan

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Work plan completed and submitted (work plan 10 and draft work plan 11)	½	
New Zealand study tour report and communication material completed	½	
Export committee objectives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China study tour completed 2. Report completed 3. Press release information and news articles 4. Write proposal for export market analyses 	Done - ½ - -	
WFT & TSWV technique transfer workshop held	Done	
Communication plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyses for gaps and recommendations put forward ** 2. Progress report available against strategic plan ** 3. Investigate Automated Fax distribution service ** 	- - Done	
Accounts updated and audited		
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced – September edition	Done	
HAL Final report library updated	Done	
Regular 'IDO NEWS' email service	Done	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	Done	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	Done	
Respond to grower enquiries	Done	
Continue to submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals	Done	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	Done	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	Done	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	Done	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with research direction 2. Plan communication activities 3. Brief R&D delegates and industry 	Done Done Done	

WORKPLAN 10

New funding submission

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Write new funding submission for WA Vegetable Industry Development Officer. **	✓	
Work plan 11 submitted	✓	
Automated Fax service established (incorporated with WA Vegetable Industry database) **	✓	
Hold regional workshops (To be completed in workplan 11)		
1. Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region	Underway	
2. Establish updated priorities for local industry	Underway	
Export committee objectives		
1. China report presented to committee **	✓	
2. Undertake activities outlined by export committee	✓	
3. PMA Study Tour **	✓	
Undertake survey of growers to measure effectiveness of IDO communication program **	Underway	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular 'IDO NEWS' email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities to Crop Protection Approvals	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates		
1. Assist with research direction	✓	
2. Plan communication activities	✓	
3. Brief R&D delegates and industry	✓	

Note: Annual Leave taken (March/April)

WORKPLAN 11

Final Report

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Final Report Completed and submitted to Horticulture Australia	✓	
R&D Committee review new R&D priorities and take WA recommendations to National R&D meeting	✓	
Project completed (Accounts audited)	✓	
Hold regional workshops	✓	
1. Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region	✓	
2. Establish updated priorities for local industry	✓	
Export committee objectives		
1. Undertake activities outlined by export committee	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular 'IDO NEWS' email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates		
1. Assist with research direction	✓	
2. Plan communication activities	✓	
3. Brief R&D delegates and industry	✓	

APPENDIX 2 Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer

Introduction

The transfer of information, derived from research projects and other information sources, within and external to the Western Australian Vegetable Industry is vital to driving positive change, growth and prosperity in the industry. Likewise the identification and prioritisation of industry issues is essential to enabling research providers in Western Australia and Australia to generate relevant and effective outcomes from their projects.

This Communication plan describes how the Vegetable Industry Development Officer will liaise with Stakeholders in the industry to ensure the results of research and development, funded through Horticulture Australia Limited from levies raised from growers and voluntary contributions, achieve positive and measurable outcomes for the industry.

The Plan recognises the effectiveness of Western Australia's Vegetable Industry Research & Development Commodity Group Members, Carrot Association for Research and Development (CARD) and the Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group in enabling our Industry to work together effectively in identifying R&D issues and ultimately only quality projects from Western Australia are put to Horticulture Australia Ltd Industry Advisory Committees for funding, with an ensuing high success rate.

Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to the ongoing development of this Plan.

This Plan does not seek to be prescriptive and does not presume to dictate how other communicators and information managers should communicate. It does however seek to describe a framework for communication that others in the industry might wish to collaborate in.

This Plan does not take into consideration the potential development of a Vegetable regional communication network as the form and function of the network has not been developed at this stage. Thus, the plan is considered a living document and will be modified in the future when the external operating environment changes.

Background

The initiation of the Industry Development Officer Project in Western Australia provided an opportunity to establish a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, Western Australian Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies around Australia. Furthermore developing linkages and working relationships with Industry Development Officers in other States was seen to be able to widen the network nationally.

Key roles of the Industry Development Officer were identified as being:

- To work closely with the Western Australia's Vegetable Industry Research & Development Commodity Group Members to ensure that projects undertaken by Western Australian research and development providers align with overall priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry.
- To maintain a database of vegetable growers and industry personnel and seek to improve the methods of message delivery to the target audience. The database to provide details that will allow relevant information to be targeted to industry participants.
- To work within the guidelines of the Western Australian vegetable industry strategic plan (developed by CORREH Consultants), also having regard for the national vegetable industry strategic plan and with particular attention to the formulation and implementation of further development strategies for the Western Australian industry.
- To organise, facilitate and manage, as required, workshops, seminars, meetings and events which will contribute to the transfer of R&D results and contribute to the progress of the Western Australian vegetable industry.
- To monitor and assess the effectiveness, over time, of all Western Australian and relevant National projects and report to the stakeholders.
- To communicate to industry through newsletters, emails, mail outs and other targeted media relevant information pertaining to the levy, research activities and information significant to the Western Australian vegetable industry.
- To work with the AusVeg National R&D Export Group to ensure that projects undertaken by research and development providers align with priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry.

Objectives

The aim of the IDO Project is to develop an efficient and effective industry communication network, in order to facilitate the exchange of information, within the Western Australian Vegetable Industry, to maximize the benefits from industry driven research and development outcomes.

Given the need for effective communication within and external to the Vegetable industry the key objectives of this Communication Plan are:

- **Increase understanding of Stakeholders of the levy collection and funding process**
- **Increase and improve access to information**
- **Enable Stakeholders to better utilise and manage information**
- **Enhance communication capabilities within the industry**

No priorities are given to specific actions appropriate for the above strategies as many of them are in progress or ongoing and will run concurrently.

Goals

The 6 key measurable outcomes from this communication plan and the IDO project are:

1. **To be communicating with 20% of WA Vegetable growers and industry electronically**
2. **Increase growing details (crops grown, areas of interest, contact details, etc) of WA Vegetable growers to 60% on the WA Vegetable Industry database**
3. **Increase adoption of new techniques recommended by research projects**
4. **Increase number of quality issues presented by industry to the WA Commodity R&D Group.**
5. **Greater participation rates of key stakeholders**
6. **Increased R&D and project inquiries by industry**

What is this project trying to achieve in the Western Australian Vegetable Industry?

Increase understanding of the process	Key messages	Increase access to information	Key messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of projects and levy investment (identify use of levy money) Awareness of Industry Development Officer Improve understanding of levy – “an investment” Improve understanding of R&D process 	<p>1, 2</p> <p>1, 5, 8</p> <p>1, 2</p> <p>1, 7, 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate opportunities to increase awareness of where and how to access information Create the desire to seek information Facilitate uptake of new technologies 	<p>3, 5</p> <p>3, 4</p> <p>2, 4</p>
Utilisation of information	Key messages	Enhance communication	Key messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritise industry issues Improve understanding of industry information Improve opportunities to convert information to knowledge to allow better business decisions – thus increase business profitability (includes outcomes from R&D) 	<p>6, 7</p> <p>3, 4</p> <p>4, 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communication links Promote active participation from growers Promote pro-active participation by other Stakeholders 	<p>5, 6</p> <p>6, 7, 8</p> <p>5, 6</p>

Key Messages

What Key Messages need to be promoted?

The following key messages were identified at a National Vegetable IDO Meeting, November 2001. They are applicable to the Western Australian vegetable industry.

1. Your levy is a worthwhile investment (potential for leverage)
2. Outcomes of direct benefit are produced from the R&D programs
3. Access to these outcomes is easy
4. Adoption may benefit your bottom line
5. There are many sources of information available
6. By working together you can achieve more
7. You can have your say
8. Program is available to all levy payers

Stakeholders

The stakeholders in the Western Australian Vegetable Industry have been identified and divided into four groups. The first group is the primary and most important target, the fourth group is the least important target.

Group 1	Group 2	
<p>Growers (Levy Payers)</p>	<p> Researchers Consultants/ agronomists Department of Agriculture WA V&G & WAFF Horticulture Australia Ltd Other Vegetable IDO's Other WA IDO's Industry associations (eg Ausveg, Women in Hort., CPA, KPIA, CGA etc.) Media </p>	<p> Exporters Wholesalers/Packers Processors Rural suppliers Machinery contractors Seed companies Nurseries Retailers Other growers (non-levy payers) </p>
Group 3	Group 4	
<p> Education/training organisations Government departments Employment agencies (labour contractors) Machinery suppliers </p>	<p> Banks/financial institutions/other business support Federal Government Local Government State Government </p>	<p> Regulatory authorities Community interest groups Rural communities Urban communities </p>

Critical Success Factors

Success Factors (positives)	Critical Issues (negatives)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enthusiastic growers ✓ Good existing communication channels ✓ High quality of researchers ✓ Support from WA Department of Agriculture ✓ Vegetable IDO in Western Australia ✓ Support from individuals within organisations ✓ Good network of rural suppliers ✓ Growers are becoming willing to pay for information ✓ IDO independence – perception from growers ✓ Horticulture Australia Ltd funding ✓ Established associations ✓ Success stories available ✓ Some researchers very outcome/communication focussed ✓ Well developed WA Vegetable Industry database ✓ Strong associations and research provided for carrots and cauliflower crops ✓ Improving national communications and research network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some Growers unwilling to change - Unenthusiastic/apathetic growers - Lack of understanding of how the levy works - Limited resources (\$) in some projects - Growers expectations – changing/different - Diversity of education/level of education - Projects that haven't delivered - Availability and adoption of technology - Unwillingness to participate in grower training - Industry fragmentation in fresh market - Large State - Lack of resources for associations - Poor network of Field Officers and Agronomists - Diversity in grower professionalism and business scale

Strategies and Actions

Objective: Increase understanding of the process

Strategies	Action	Who	When	Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness of project and levy investment / awareness of Industry Development Officer 	- Promoting levy involvement in R&D projects	Researchers	Ongoing	4, 5
	- Vegenotes to include levy information	Veg Project	Early 2003	4, 5
	- Promoting levy involvement in IDO project	IDO	Ongoing	2, 6
	- Vegernote/brochure on IDO network	Veg Project	Early 2003	1, 2, 6
	- Ensuring all activities promote levy involvement	IDO	Ongoing	5
	- Communication of IDO position and activities (Putting a face to the position)	IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve understanding of the levy 	- Protocol for recognising levy involvement (upfront specific words & HAL logo)	HAL & IDOs	2003 (by proposal stage)	4, 5
	- Vegenotes series produced	Veg Project		3
	- Maintain production and distribution of communication publications – IDO newsletters (WA VegeLink), Email (IDO News), Targeted mail outs, etc [articles explaining levy]	IDO	Early 2003 Ongoing	1, 2, 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve understanding of R & D process 	- Develop short presentation 'pack' available on project and levy information and process/outcomes	HAL & IDOs	Ongoing	4, 5
	- Produce case studies and testimonials of success stories.	Researchers, HAL & IDOs	Ongoing	3, 5

Strategies	Action	Who	When	Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of where and how to access information • Create desire to seek information. • Facilitate uptake of new technologies. 	- Ensure up to date contact details available on publications and communications	IDO	Ongoing	2, 6
	- Facilitate ongoing communications within network	IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 4
	- Review communication channels periodically	IDO	Ongoing	3, 5
	- Identify preferred media methods/channels of communication	IDO	Ongoing	2, 3, 5
	- Promote information sources to industry	IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 6
	- Provide targeted information for specific audiences	Researchers & IDO	Ongoing	2, 3, 5, 6
	- Provide localised or specialist contact for further information	Researchers & IDO	Ongoing	3, 5, 6
	- Organise growers tours/visits of successful/interesting implementation of outcomes by local growers	Researchers & IDO	Ongoing	3, 5
	- Organise specific field days/workshops/displays etc	IDO		
	- Encourage use of Website - promoting address	IDO	When operational	1, 3
	- Identify innovators and industry leaders	IDO	Ongoing	5
	- Facilitate existing and new discussion groups	IDO	Ongoing	4
	- Provide support to other discussion groups	IDO	Ongoing	4
	- Use growers to present at forums	Appropriate growers IDO	Ongoing	3, 5
	- Identify possibilities for growers and service providers to participate in high quality study tours	IDO	Ongoing	3, 4

Objective: Increase and improve access to information

Objective: Better utilisation of information

Strategies	Action	Who	When	Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the identification and prioritisation of industry issues 	- IDO to provide appropriate support to the WA Vegetable R&D Commodity Group Members encourage feedback through other avenues	IDO	Ongoing	4, 5
	- Seek feedback from workshops, field days, meetings, mail outs, correspondence, etc to identify issues and priorities	IDO	Ongoing	2, 4, 5
	- Work appropriate with industry groups Carrot Association for Research and Development (CARD) and the Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group.	IDO	Ongoing	4, 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and understanding of industry issues and information 	- Timely and easy to understand communication to growers and others (eg newsletters, email, workshops, field days, Vegenotes, etc)	IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 3, 6
	- Facilitate Research Provider and Commodity Group meetings	IDO	Ongoing	4, 5
	- Maintain good communications between state association and IDO	IDO	Ongoing	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to create the knowledge to allow better business decisions for increasing profitability. 	- Source and distribute relevant information via Newsletters, Email, magazines, Vegenotes, and workshops etc	IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 3, 6
	- Ensure adequate funding is allocated to technology transfer in projects including appropriate Communication Strategies	Researchers	Ongoing	3, 5
	- Use growers to present at forums	Appropriate growers	Ongoing	3, 5
	- Package up information from various projects	Researchers & IDO	Ongoing	3

Objective: Enhance communication capabilities within the industry

Strategies	Action	Who	When	Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, improve and maintain communication network throughout the vegetable industry and external to the vegetable industry. • Promote active participation from growers • Promote pro-active participation by other Stakeholders 	- Maintain Vegetable and WA IDO networks	All IDOs	Ongoing	3, 4, 5
	- Identify existing networks within the vegetable industry	IDO	Complete	3, 5
	- Identify and use effective existing networks	IDO	Ongoing	3, 4, 5
	- Identify gaps in networks and develop strategies to address these gaps	IDO	Ongoing	3
	- Develop and maintain vegetable industry database and mail list with detailed information for targeted communication	IDO	Ongoing	2
	- Develop and maintain electronic communication database for the vegetable industry	IDO	Ongoing	1
	- Share information/newsletters from other IDO's and research projects	All IDOs	Ongoing	3, 4
	- Facilitate Research Provider and Commodity Group meetings	IDO	Ongoing	4, 5
	- Ensure contents of workshops, meetings, field days, conferences and forums are targeted, relevant and presented in appropriate manner to audience	Researcher s & IDO	Ongoing	3, 4, 5
	- Facilitate Research Provider and Commodity Group meetings (May provide opportunity to identify communication skill gaps and opportunity for some communications training)	Researcher s & IDO	Ongoing	5
	- Ensure invitations to attend meetings, workshops and information days are circulated as widely as possible	Researcher s & IDO	Ongoing	1, 2, 5
	- Set up events information exchange within wider industry	IDO	Ongoing	5
- Encourage National collaboration to enhance project outcomes	IDO	Ongoing	3	

APPENDIX 3 Feedback Form

Take the time to update your details on the WA Vegetable Industry Database.

FAX or Mail

Fax: 08 9226 0344

Mail: PO Box 498, West Perth, 6872

I grow vegetables that are included in the national vegetable levy: Yes / No

I am involved in the Vegetable Industry: Yes / No

If Yes, What is your role? _____

My Details are:

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Business Name: _____

Mobile: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

What is your Communication Preference (please rank 1, 2, 3)

- Email – Short frequent cost effective service. 120 growers current receive this service.
- Fax – New! 1 page R&D update. Approx. monthly
- Mail – When required.

Areas of Interest (Please tick any area of interest)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brassica vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Processing/ Value adding vegetables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leafy vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Export vegetables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Root vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydroponics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cucurbit vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality assurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minor use chemicals | <input type="checkbox"/> Organics |

What Crops do you grow?

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artichokes | <input type="checkbox"/> Celery | <input type="checkbox"/> Okra | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet corn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Chillies | <input type="checkbox"/> Paprika | <input type="checkbox"/> Squash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beetroot | <input type="checkbox"/> Courgettes | <input type="checkbox"/> Parsley | <input type="checkbox"/> Swede |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beans | <input type="checkbox"/> Cucurbits | <input type="checkbox"/> Parsnips | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet Potato |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broccoli | <input type="checkbox"/> Cucumbers | <input type="checkbox"/> Peas | <input type="checkbox"/> Turnip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brussel Sprouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Daikon | <input type="checkbox"/> Pumpkin | <input type="checkbox"/> Zucchini |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bunch Lines | <input type="checkbox"/> Egg plant | <input type="checkbox"/> Radish | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cabbage | <input type="checkbox"/> English Spinach | <input type="checkbox"/> Rhubarb | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capsicum | <input type="checkbox"/> Leeks | <input type="checkbox"/> Shallots | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carrots | <input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver beet | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cauliflowers | <input type="checkbox"/> Mesclun | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Onions | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

APPENDIX 4 WA VegeNEWS email example

To: (Recipient list suppressed)
Subject: WA VegeNEWS (4): Minor Use Update - Radish

Hello All,

Re: Radish Minor Use Update

Your grower owner company, Crop Protection Approvals Ltd (CPA) has been working for the last couple of years obtaining minor use permits on industry's behalf. To assist you the grower in meeting your legal and QA requirements.

Please find below the status of Radish minor use requests from industry.

Each week I plan to send you the minor use details of one vegetable crop so that you can easily identify if there are any minor use chemical permits that you require. The information sent will contain the approved permits, current work in progress, proposed work (requests from growers - wishlist), deferred work, requests already registered and rejected work.

The list is a completed summary of all the requests from growers.

If you required a permit that has not been registered contact the WA, IDO - David Ellement.

Next week we will look at Brassica Leafy Vegetables

If you are unsure about an chemical application visit the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority web site: www.apvma.gov.au or Crop Protection Approvals web site: www.cpaltd.com.au

COMPLETED CPA Minor Use Permits

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Permit Number	Expiry Date
Radish	DBM, Looper	Karate Zeon	lambda-cyhalothrin	5719	31/03/2006
Radish	Weeds	Stomp	pendimethalin	5767	31/03/2008
Radish, turnip, swede	Weeds	Ramrod	propachlor	6137	31/12/2008
Radish	DBM, Looper	Success	spinosad	5955	30/09/2004

IN PROGRESS CPA Minor Use Permits

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status	Project Group
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Radish	Red Legged Earth Mite	Fastac or Dominex	alpha-cypermethrin	In progress	Autumn 2002
Radish	White rust	Amistar	azoxystrobin	In progress	Spring 2001
Radish	White Rust (Albugo candida)	Bravo	chlorothalonil	In progress	Spring 2002
Radish	White Rust & Downy Mildew	Acrobat	dimethomorph	In progress	Spring 2002
Radish	Alternaria & Cercospora	Dithane DF	mancozeb	In progress	Spring 2001
Radish	White Rust (Albugo candida) & Downy Mildew	Ridomil Gold MZ	metalaxyl-M + mancozeb	In progress	Spring 2002
Radish	Western flower thrips	Nitofol	methamidophos	In progress	Autumn 2001
Radish	Cabbage white butterfly & WFT	Lannate	methomyl	In progress	Spring 2001
Radish	Pythium and Downy mildew	Agri-fos Supa 400	phosphorous acid	In progress	Applied for with root vegetables

PROPOSED CPA Minor Use Permits

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Radish	Cluster Caterpillar, Cabbage White Butterfly and Cabbage Moth	Dominex	alpha-cypermethrin	Proposed
Radish	Alternaria & Downy Mildew	Bravo	chlorothalonil	Proposed
Radish	Not specified	Endosulfan	endosulfan	Proposed

DEFERRED CPA Minor Use Permits

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status	APVMA issues
Radish	Alternaria & Cercospora	Polyram	metiram	Deferred	Other products being applied for
Radish	WFT	Phosdrin	mevinphos	Deferred	Other products being applied for
Radish	Not specified	Antracol	propineb	Deferred	Other products being applied for
Radish	White Rust	Fruvit	propineb+oxadixyl	Deferred	Other products being applied for

Requested Already Registered

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Radish	Helitohis	Bt	Bacillus thuringiensis (a2) +/-or Bt(k)	Already Registered
Radish	Botrytis	Bravo	chlorothalonil	Already Registered
Radish	Weeds	Dacthal	chlorthal-dimethyl	Already Registered
Radish	Not specified	Copper	copper	Already Registered
Radish	Not specified	Dimethoate	dimethoate	Already Registered
Radish	Not specified	Malathion	maldison	Already Registered
Radish	Slugs	Slug out	metaldehyde	Already Registered
Radish	Not specified	Mesurool	methiocarb	Already Registered
Radish	mites	Omite	propargite	Already Registered
Radish	Not specified	Thiovit	sulphur	Already Registered

Kind regards,

David Ellement

"Your levy @ work."

David Ellement
Vegetable Industry Development Officer (WA)

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Email: ellement@iinet.net.au

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