Facilitating the communication and development of the Vegetable Industry in NSW

Alison Anderson
NSW Farmers Association

Project Number: VG99053
VG99053

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A follow-up meeting was organised by the growers and NSWFA for the 19th June. We were able to get Peter Dal Santo (AgAware Consulting) to speak with the growers about chemical use in hydroponics at the meeting. Following the meeting Peter provided me with extra information for the growers and he has also gained approval from HAL and AUSVEG to compile a list of permitted chemicals in hydroponics for several crops as a result of requests from NSW growers.

3. Soil UTE guide for vegetable growers

Following on from the distribution of the soil management ute guide in January 2007 the soil project team (Project Leader is Helena Whitman, AUSVEG) planned and held the first 3 ‘Soil Awareness Days’. These field days introduced growers to using the ute guide in the field and introduced them to basic soil concepts. The first field days were held in Victoria (Werribee), NSW (Dareton) and SA (Northern Adelaide Plains). Additionally the ute guide was launched by Minister Peter McGauran at the Werribee Vegetable Expo. Feedback from growers and industry people about the ute guide has been very positive.

The Management Committee has agreed for me to work on this Land & Water Australia funded and AUSVEG managed project as it is an important development project for the Australian vegetable industry.

4. NSW Vegetable Industry Database

In the last few months an update of the NSW vegetable industry database has been done, in particular of the Cambodian and Chinese speaking growers in the Sydney region. Following two field days at which I spoke, growers asked for their names to be added to the database or for their details to be checked. The NSW database now has approximately 1050 growers and approximately 300 industry people based in NSW. The database continues to be updated.

5. Contributions to GF&V

I have continued to provide articles for each edition of Good Fruit & Vegetables magazine. However with the new editor and format for the magazine the IDOs have recently been advised that there will no longer be a regular vegetable R&D section.

6. Mail out of Industry Information

Targeted mailouts to growers who have let me know what crops they grow have continued (e.g. Brassica IPM newsletter and the new VegPASH newsletter). An email update of minor use permits also goes to those who have requested it (mainly extension staff, consultants and rural suppliers who give chemical advice to vegetable growers).
7. **Other Events/Activities**

Other events attended and activities included:

- Meeting with Richard de Vos, Sydney (31<sup>st</sup> January).
- Submitted nominations for the AUSVEG Awards (February/March).
- Assisted growers to apply for positions on the new R&D advisory groups (February/March).
- IPM pathology gap analysis workshop, Richmond (6<sup>th</sup> February). I was responsible for organising the NSW meeting.
- NSW DPI chemical residues meeting with growers and industry representatives, Sydney (9<sup>th</sup> February). This meeting reported on the findings of the NSW DPI residue survey and asked industry how issues could be addressed.
- Sydney Markets tour for Sumitomo staff (14<sup>th</sup> February).
- NSW vegetable R&D meeting, Bathurst (26<sup>th</sup> February).
- AUSVEG/HAL/IDO meeting, Sydney (5<sup>th</sup> March).
- National Vegetable R&D meeting, Sydney (6<sup>th</sup> March).
- NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee meeting, Sydney (12<sup>th</sup> March).
- Greenhouse modification workshop (12<sup>th</sup> March).
- Soil Ute Guide project meeting, Adelaide (19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> March).
- NSW DPI vegetable compost field day, Camden (27<sup>th</sup> March).
- NSW DPI Sydney field vegetable good agricultural practices demonstration block information day, Richmond (29<sup>th</sup> March).
- Zucchini virus management field day, Freemans Reach (3<sup>rd</sup> April).
- ACCC/NSWFA Code of Conduct meeting, Richmond (4<sup>th</sup> April).
- Meeting with Levies Revenue Unit at Sydney Markets, Sydney (17<sup>th</sup> April). I meet with officers at the LRU approximately every 6 months to let them know about vegetable R&D activities and to get feedback from them about their dealings with vegetable growers.
- Werribee vegetable field days and the launch of the Soil Ute Guide for Vegetable Growers by Minister McGauran, Werribee (2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> May).
- AVIDG workshop, Sydney (8<sup>th</sup> May). I was involved in invitations and giving the consultants industry contacts.
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- Lettuce training day, Cowra (24<sup>th</sup> May). Involved in invitations.
- Cambodian growers field day, Cecil Park (25<sup>th</sup> May) – I spoke about the R&D program and the information growers could receive if they were on the IDO database.
- RIRDC Asian Foods Program R&D meeting, Sydney (29<sup>th</sup> May).
- Vegetable Industry Conference, Sydney (30<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June). Chair of some R&D sessions. On the last day of the conference I led a tour group to Sydney Markets, a local hydroponic lettuce farm and the Gosford Horticultural Institute.
- Vegetable R&D Working Groups meeting, Sydney (13<sup>th</sup> June) and associated teleconferences following the meeting (IPM, soil health).
**Work Plan (July 2007 – February 2008)**

Key performance criteria:

- Successful Brassica IPM workshops, with good attendance and grower involvement.
- Reports for the Vegetable R&D Environmental Working Group from the TQA EMS Conference and the joint Fertiliser Application Technology Workshop and Australasian Precision Agriculture Symposium.
- Attendance and input into key grower workshops (e.g. lettuce training day, LVHN annual meeting).
- Organisation of a hydroponic workshop for the Australian Chinese Growers Association of NSW.
- Completion of Land & Water Australia funded and AUSVEG managed soil awareness days.
- Completion of VG99053 final report.

Four Brassica IPM workshops will be held in NSW in July (23rd – 25th) with the Brassica DBM team from SARDI. Workshops will be held in Bathurst, Leppington (with Chinese translation), Camden and Richmond. The Brassica IPM workshops in previous years have been well-received by the growers and it is hoped that these growers that have attended previously will return for the final workshops of this project.

The Management Committee has approved my attendance at two conferences that are relevant to the National Vegetable R&D Environmental Working Group (of which I am part of). It is essential that the Working Groups have up-to-date information about research and development nationally and internationally in their relevant areas so that they can make sound investment decisions. They have asked that I write a report for the Working Group on the outcomes of the two conferences – the TQA EMS Conference (6th – 9th August, Hobart) and the joint Fertiliser Application Technology Workshop and the Australasian Precision Agriculture Symposium (13th & 14th September, Wellington, NZ).

The Chinese growers in Sydney are becoming increasingly interested in growing Asian leafy brassicas hydroponically. They have asked me to organise a hydroponics workshop for them.

Before the end of September three more soil awareness days need to run as part of the Land & Water Australia funded and AUSVEG managed soil project. Additionally a DVD is to be developed to support the use of the soil ute guide (particularly by those growers who are unable to attend a soil awareness day). This DVD is to be filmed before, during and after the soil awareness day in Sydney. I will be involved in filming and in writing the script for the DVD.

The final report for VG99053 will be written in January/February 2008.
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- HAL Soil Health Group Teleconference (11\textsuperscript{th} July). It has been decided that this group, lead by Alison Turnbull (HAL) will have a teleconference every 2\textsuperscript{nd} week.
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- Production of ‘VEGE\textit{link}’ newsletter.
- Continue targeted mailouts to growers.
- Continue updating database.
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