

VX00031

**Development of new export markets for
Australian Asparagus in the Middle East
and Europe**

Peter Brown and Sophie Morell
Australian Asparagus Council



Know-how for Horticulture™

VX00031

This report is published by the Horticulture Australia Ltd to pass on information concerning horticultural research and development undertaken for the asparagus industry.

The research contained in this report was funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd with the financial support of the Australian Asparagus Council Inc.

All expressions of opinion are not to be regarded as expressing the opinion of Horticulture Australia Ltd or any authority of the Australian Government.

The Corporation and the Australian Government accept no responsibility for any of the opinions or the accuracy of the information contained in this report and readers should rely upon their own enquiries in making decisions concerning their own interests.

Cover price: \$22.00 (GST Inclusive)
ISBN 0 7341 0213 5

Published and distributed by:
Horticultural Australia Ltd
Level 1
50 Carrington Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 8295 2300
Fax: (02) 8295 2399
E-Mail: horticulture@horticulture.com.au

© Copyright 2001

Horticulture Australia Limited

Horticultural Research and Development Corporation
Project No: VX00031 (Completion date: May 1st, 2001)

*Development of new export markets for Australian Asparagus in the
Middle East and Europe*

Author(s): Mr Peter Brown and Ms Sophie Morell

Research Provider: Australian Asparagus Council

HRDC Project Number: VX00031

Project Leader: Peter Brown
Asparagus Industry Development Officer
Australian Asparagus Council
7 Coull Close
BORONIA, 3155
VICTORIA

Phone: 03 9762 5799
Fax: 03 9778 8870
Mobile: 0413 384 661
E-mail: dirtdoctor@agri-link.com.au

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to highlight the identified potential export markets to the Middle East and Europe for Australian Asparagus. This initial identification process has great potential for the development of new export markets for other Victorian fresh produce commodities.

Funding Sources:

The Australian Asparagus Council would like thank and acknowledge the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation, Department of State and Regional Development - Victorian State Government and Cardinia Shire Council for their financial support with this research project.

Report Date: 3 April 2001

Disclaimer:

Any recommendations contained in this publication do not necessarily represent current HRDC policy. No person should act on the basis of the contents of this publication, whether as to matters of fact or opinion or other content, without first obtaining specific, independent professional advice in respect of the matters set out in this publication.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	19
Media Summary	20
Results of Discussions	21
Initial Observation	21
Processed Asparagus	21
Fresh Asparagus	22
Paddock to Plane	22
Plane to Presentation	22
Presentation to Plate	24
Plate to Palate	25
Implications for Australian Horticulture	27
Scientific Testing - DNRE	27
Dubai Municipality Public Health Department - Food Control Sector	27
Importing	27
Re-Export and Other Health Certificates	29
Packaging	30
Freight	30
AQIS	31
Information dissemination	33
Itinerary	34
Recommendations	39
Acknowledgments	41
Contact List	42

Media Summary

The Middle East market holds Victorian fresh produce in high regard. Victoria grows most of Australia's export asparagus and in February a number of growers with the support from Cardinia Shire Council attended Gulfood 2001.

Gulfood is held biennially in Dubai (United Arab Emirates). Strategically located at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa, Dubai is the gateway to a market of over one billion people, and is firmly established as the business, financial and commercial centre of the Middle East.

Victorian Asparagus growers have identified great market potential in the Middle East, due to a highly developed and ever expanding transport infrastructure, global and regional air cargo links, plus a sophisticated financial services sector, which make it the ideal base from which to penetrate the region's growing markets. The main purpose of the research mission was to establish key data as to the potential demand in the Middle Eastern market for asparagus.

Currently, the Gulf food market is estimated at over US\$9 billion, with projections for further growth. Over 70% of Dubai food imports are re-exported to neighbouring countries, resulting in Dubai being a potential strategic marketplace.

During the weeklong research mission to Dubai, the project team met with key Middle Eastern food sector importers, distributors, wholesalers, Government Ministries and the lucrative hotel and restaurant industries. Currently, the data indicates that there is no asparagus being imported from Australia.

What sets our produce ahead of our competitors is its quality. Key strengths of the Victorian Asparagus Industry are its prime natural resources, clean 'green' environment, chemical free production systems and highly efficient handling technologies. After rigorous scientific testing by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment it has been proven that Victorian asparagus is clean of any chemical residue.

The response to asparagus in the Middle East surpassed all expectations. The demand for fresh produce is most encouraging. Currently, Thailand is exporting low-grade asparagus to Dubai. The responses were overwhelmingly in favour of the size and quality of the produce. This research mission has clearly identified great potential for asparagus in the Middle East. The essential links and relationships which were formed will play a pivotal role in the development of this market. To capitalise on this opportunity it is recommended that a trade mission be developed to assist the exporting companies of asparagus to attend the Middle East and meet with the buyers and wholesalers. This follow up is essential to maintaining a presence in the market.



Gulfood Billboard
World Trade Centre Exhibition Hall



Sophie Morell - Cardinia Shire Council and
Frank Butera - Victorian Asparagus Producer

Results of Discussions

Initial Observation

"Who is your agent?" was the most common question asked during the five day Gulfood expo held in Dubai.

The initial proposal was that a team mans a stand at Gulfood 2001. This stand was used to showcase Australian Asparagus products - primarily fresh and processed to food service industry representatives. More importantly it served as a temporary base with presentation and storage facilities, where the representatives met and conducted research with prospective importers and agents.

The team was on a mission to establish whether there was a market for Australian fresh produce in the Middle East. From the outset of the exhibition it became quite clear and evident that there was tremendous interest not just with asparagus but also other fresh produce such as beans, carrots and various types of fruit.

During the 4-day exhibition, the team spent time discussing with potential clients the benefits of Australian Asparagus but also developing and establishing strategic relationships. At the same time the team also researched other exhibiting companies who had an asparagus product range. It became clear that these products where primarily processed or frozen. There were no fresh vegetables other than asparagus at Gulfood 2001. The only other fresh produce were apples from California, USA.

Processed Asparagus

The processed and frozen products came from three main regions North America, Asia and Europe. There where two primary product lines from the United States - frozen stir fry mixes and canned asparagus (2 different sizes).

From Europe (Italy and Spain) the product was bottled, which contained both the green and white asparagus. The Asian (Thailand and Philippines) products where canned. This product from the Philippines contained produce from Thailand. To increase investment in the Philippines, the Government has introduced a program that allows for the importation of raw product for processing and export. This process does not incur any importation or export taxes from the Philippine Government.

Currently the consumer demand for food products in the Middle East is of the processed nature. In recent times the food markets have started to notice a movement in the consumer purchasing habits and tastes. With recent concerns about genetically modified foods, BSE and Foot and Mouth, consumers are beginning to become more aware of the environmental issues surrounding food products. Thus contributing to a change in consumer preferences.

As a result of the field trip visits to the major (Carrefour and Spinneys) Supermarket Chains in Dubai, it was quite evident that there is a large selection of canned product in all ranges of vegetables. It is estimated that there are 5 - 10 product lines of canned asparagus shelved at the supermarkets that are supplied for the three regions mentioned above.

The other processed asparagus product was soup. This product was presented as two main textures - powered and canned. Brands such as Maggi - soup (Switzerland), Batchelors - soup (United Kingdom), Green Giant - canned (USA) and S&W Fine Foods - canned (USA) where well represented in the supermarkets. Small brands such as Lunch - canned (China) and Knorr - dehydrated soup (Philippines) where also readily available in the various supermarkets. Asparagus soup (both textures) were also presented as mixed product lines

such as Asparagus and Chicken Soup, Asparagus Soup, Cream of Asparagus and Mix Vegetable and Asparagus Soup.

Fresh Asparagus

The response towards the fresh produce was very encouraging, albeit somewhat mystifying, until the field trip to the Supermarkets when we realised why. Simply - it was the quality of the produce.

Product in the supermarkets was of extremely poor quality. In general it lacked colour, flavour, texture and was woody. (this is a term used by asparagus growers when a product lacks moisture and is extremely fibrous). This product was being imported from Thailand, as they are able to produce all year round.

At the exhibition, the Australian Asparagus growers were the only stand to have fresh vegetables. The main advantage of displaying fresh produce, was that potential client were able to see the quality of the produce that is available.

Paddock to Plane

The fresh asparagus that was taken to Dubai for display was 130kg (26 x 5kg boxes) of "A Grade" green asparagus. The asparagus was cut on Tuesday February 20th, for export on Wednesday 21st. Strict 'cool chain' conditions were maintained from the packing shed to final destination.

When the produce arrived at the freight forwarders, the vehicle was unloaded in a climate-controlled room and stacked immediately in a cool storage refrigerator. Once all fresh produce from the various companies participating at Gulfood was delivered to the freight forwarders, the produce was packed in a specialised air freight container with dry ice. Prior to packing, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services inspected the asparagus for any disease or insects, this was to ensure the fresh produce was not in breach of any International or Australian quarantine laws.



Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services Health Officer
inspects Australian Asparagus

Plane to Presentation

The produce was then air freighted directly to Dubai, in the temperature controlled freight container. On arrival in Dubai, the UAE Government cleared all produce for Gulfood. It was at this stage that all Australian produce was repacked into a refrigerated vehicle for transport to the World Trade and Exhibition Centre.

Once at the World Trade and Exhibition Centre, an on site refrigerator was hired for the storage of all Australian produce, which required cool storage. Due to the different types of products being stored in the refrigerator, that location of each product in the fridge was essential in maintaining its quality. Maintaining the controlled temperature was also a key factor. In one instance the refrigerator temperature was turned down from +4° to 0° which resulted in 4 of the 26 boxes of asparagus being frozen.

During the show only 12 boxes of asparagus were on display at any one time, with the remaining amount in the cool room. At the end of each open period, the asparagus was restacked in the cool room, to prevent the asparagus heads from opening and to maintain the freshness of the produce.

From the time the product was cut to the time that it was displayed at the exhibition, it was in a temperature-controlled climate on +4° Centigrade.



Frank Butera & Sophie Morell at Gulfood



Setting up the Stand



Product Arrival



Peter Deacon - Executive Director,
Victorian Government Business Office and Frank Butera.

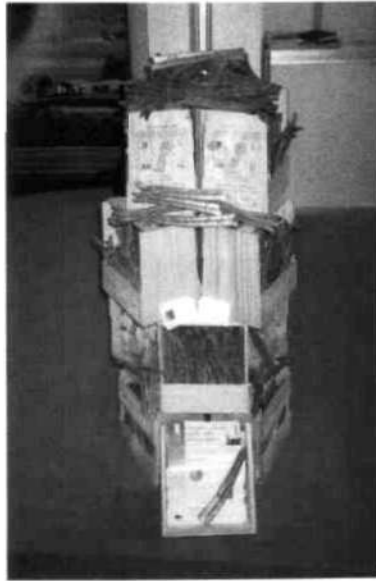
Presentation to Plate

During the exhibition, the level of interest in Australian asparagus was phenomenal. There were three key drivers, which generated the interest in the product:

1. The Freshness
2. The Size
3. The Quality

The Freshness of the product was the initial drawcard. The feedback was consistent during the entire exhibition with comments such as "I have never seen such fresh asparagus" and "The colour is just amazing". From there the visitors noticed the size and quality. The main type of asparagus available in the supermarkets is - Baby Asparagus. This is packaged in 100gm or 200gm plastic containers; the product is between 10 and 15cm long with a diameter of 50mm. The asparagus are very pale green in colour and are currently being imported from Thailand.

The various Executive Chefs from the leading hotels and airlines in the Middle East region demonstrated very positive feedback and enthusiasm for Victorian Asparagus. These chefs are by nature, particularly sensitive to the quality the product they use and were generally most impressed by the Victorian product.



Asparagus at Gulfood 2001

Plate to Palate

At the conclusion of Gulfood, The World Trade Centre Hotel, as a part of a successful marketing for international cuisine promotion used left over asparagus in a culinary promotion of the product.

In Dubai the month of March is called the Shopping Festival. This event attracts over 2 million people. It also coincides with the Dubai World Cup (Horse Racing), Dubai Desert Gold Classic and the Dubai Tennis Championship. During this busy month, the hotels throughout Dubai run at full capacity. It is during this busy period that a number of the hotels ran various promotional activities. The World Trade Centre Hotel was having a promotion called "Flavours of the World", so each week they would specialise their cuisine to the various regions of the world. At the conclusion of the exhibition they were promoting cuisine from the Americas and then Asia. This coincided perfectly with our product.

So Mr Cuthbert developed a menu which highlighted the asparagus and the diversity of the product. This promotion was well promoted across the Jumeriah International hotel group, which the World trade Centre Hotel is part of.

On the last evening at the conclusion of the exhibition there was a networking function held at home of the Victorian Government Business Office - Executive Director, Mr Peter Deacon. This function was used to display and taste the product, which was showcased at the exhibition. A number of strategic buyers and distributors were also invited and to taste the Victorian produce. The response was encouraging for all producers involved.



Working with World Trade Centre Hotel Executive Chef - Andy Cuthbert



Implications for Australian Horticulture

As a result of this research mission to the Middle East, there is clearly potential for the Australian horticultural industry. Below lists a number of areas, which have been identified where there could be potential implications:

Scientific Testing - DNRE

Over the 2000/2001-harvest season, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment conducted a statistically valid random sampling program on Victorian Asparagus. Samples were selected from packing sheds throughout Victoria on a weekly basis and tested for a range of chemicals.

Results were then compared to Australian and some key export markets standards for pesticides (commonly known as Maximum Residue Limits). There was an extremely low incidence of unacceptable residues detected through this program.

The results indicate that Victorian Asparagus equals or exceeds global standards with respect to the low incidence of residue violations detected. It was found that the vast majority of tests (99.9%) in fact had no chemicals at all, quantifying that asparagus is clean and green.

This testing has provided the asparagus industry with a niche product and key marketing tool. DNRE have identified a number of other horticultural products, which will also be tested.

Due to the success of this test, it will enable other industries that claim to have a "clean and green product" to substantiate their claim. When claiming that a product is clean and green it is essential to be able to quantify with recognised scientific testing and results.

Refer to Appendix 1

Dubai Municipality Public Health Department - Food Control Sector

The Public Health Department of Dubai Municipality (DMPHD) is aiming at ensuring that food supplied to consumers is wholesome, safe and complies with international food standards

With Dubai being one of the biggest trade centres in the world and with 70-80% of its imports being re-exported, complying with the DMPHD food control sector, this will enable access to other Gulf marketplaces. Listed below are the Guidance Notes for food companies.

Importing

1. Documentation Required

The following original documentation is required to accompany every consignment of foodstuff entering Dubai:

- a. Bill of Entry or Airway Bill
- b. Packing List
- c. Health Certificate
- d. Halal Certificate (for meat and poultry)

2. **Labelling**

- Labelling on each item must be:
 - a. Difficult to remove or alter
 - b. Clear and easily read
 - c. Specifying the source of animal fat, meat enzymes, gelatine or any other animal product if the product contains any of them.
- The label must not be:
 - a. False, misleading or deceiving
 - b. Suggest that it is another foodstuff
 - c. With covered, altered or obliterated data
- The label must show the following;
 - a. The brand name
 - b. The name of the foodstuff (product name)
 - c. The ingredients in descending order according to volume
 - d. The Net contents (weight or volume)
 - e. The country of origin
 - f. Production and expiry dates
 - g. The name and address of the manufacturer
 - h. The names or E No. of all additives (if any)
 - i. The conditions of storage (if applicable)
 - j. The method of preparation for consumption (if applicable)

* *Alcohol Is Not Permitted In Any Foodstuff*

3. **Dating of Foodstuffs**

Please Note:

- Each item of food must show a production and expiry data
- Dates cannot be handwritten or on stickers
- Dates must not be easily removable
- The day, month and year of production and expiry must be shown for products with less than six months shelf life
- The month and year of production and expiry are required for products with more than six months shelf life
- Date must be mechanically printed, embossed or ink jetted
- Foods cannot be double dated
- Imported foods cannot be date marked in Dubai or Jebel Ali Free Zone

* *(Dates on stickers are not permitted).*

4. **Rejection Avoidance**

To avoid consignment rejection the following should be ensured:

- The correct shelf life for the product is applied according to the appropriate legislation
- The label complies with the requirements laid down in the relevant legislation
- The product does not contain un-permitted ingredients or additives
- The manufacturer is aware of the microbiological and chemical standards for the relevant foodstuffs.
- All the required label information is in either Arabic or English
- The production and expiry dates and printed, embossed or ink jetted onto the food container.

5. ***Actions for Rejected Food (unfit)***
 Consignments for food found to be unfit for human consumption will be rejected. The foodstuff must either be re-exported to the country of origin or destroyed under supervision of Food Control Section - D.M

6. ***Actions for Rejected Food (non-complying)***
 Consignments of food found not to be complying with labelling, shelf life or composition standards but not considered unfit for human consumption will be rejected for importation into Dubai.
 The foodstuff must be re-exported to the country of origin, re-exported to a third country (non-GCC) or destroyed under supervision of the Food Control Sector - D.M.

- * Before importing any foodstuff make sure of the following:
 - a. Refer to the food control section at Dubai Municipality when deciding to import new food stuff in order to approve the new food label
 - b. Send samples of such foods to the Municipality laboratory to ensure compliance to the specifications of UAE and its fitness to human consumption
 - c. Ensure that health certificates of the consignment are issued from a governmental entity in the country of origin
 - d. Ensure that the Islamic society issuing the "Halal" certificate is approved in the UAE Authorities.

- * When importing any foodstuff through the UAE ports, make sure of the following:
 - a. All required consignments documents are accompanied
 - b. Make sure of all the exact status of the consignment release, as some consignments are released with undertaking due to health or legal violations or deferred inspected at the company's warehouse.

- * Before exporting any foodstuff make sure of the following:
 - a. All the health requirements of the country to which foodstuff is exported
 - b. Obtain an export health certificate before shipping the consignment to the country of destination

Re-Export and Other Health Certificates

In the situation that a company would like to re-export their product from Dubai, it is fundamental that contact be made with the Public Health Department. Listed below are the rules and regulations required for re-exporting.

1. ***Export Health Certificate***
 - Fill in the application form
 - Fees payment of 200/- Dhs for each certificate
 - Certificate of origin for the foodstuff issued by the chamber of commerce and industry
 - Foodstuff Invoice
 - List of items including Items name, Quantity, Production and Expiry dates, Country of origin and weight if there are more than five items.

2. ***Export Health Certificate to G.C.C***

- Fill in the application form
 - Fees payment of 100/- Dhs for each certificate
 - Foodstuff Invoice
 - Sample required if necessary
 - List of items should be attached with the form including Items name, Quantity, Production and Expiry dates, Country of origin and weigh if there are more than five items.
- * This certificate is issued for Dubai local products intended to export to G.C.C
- * **Radiation Certificate**
- Fill in the application
 - Fees payment according to the Number of samples
 - Sample required for lab test
- * **Destruction Certificate**
- Fill in the application form
 - Fees payment according to the value of the products
 - Rejection report for the consignment if found unit by the food control section
 - Destruction will be carried on under the supervision of food inspector and in the presence of the company representative
 - Issuing Material destruction Certificate
- * **Certificate of Analysis**
- Fill in the application form
 - Food samples for the required test
 - Fees payment of 100/- Dhs for each item
 - Analysis Certificate could be received after 3-7 days depends on the items
- * **Import for Re-Export Procedure**
- Fill in the application form
 - Deposit should be paid, then consignment release order will be faxed to the competent port
 - Re-Export Document should be submitted within (45) days
 - Refunding the deposit

Packaging

When importing foodstuff into Dubai, there is a number of packaging requirements that need to be applied. In the event that these specifications and requirements are not met, then the product will either be destroyed or re-exported to a non-G.C.C country.

Packaging specifications and requirements for the importation of foodstuffs has been previously discussed. Refer to the previous section: *Importing Section 1 - Documents Required, Section 2 - Labelling, Section 3 - Dating of Foodstuff.*

Freight

When freighting fresh produce into the Middle East there are a number of key integrated processes that are essential to the quality of the product. Currently when freighting fresh produce from Melbourne all flights have a transit stop in either

Malaysia or Singapore. Then the flight will proceed to Dubai. The length of the transit time in Malaysia varies. In total the flight time (excluding transit) is and estimated sixteen (16) hours.

During this whole period the produce is require to be refrigerated. From the time the produce leaves the packing shed to the time that it arrives at the distribution location in Dubai, it is essential that the product is in maintained at in temperature controlled climate.

The national airline of the UAE is Emirates Airlines which flies directly into Dubai. There are also a number of other airlines that fly through Dubai. It has been estimated that during the next two years Emirate will be commissioning new aircraft's, that will have the ability to fly directly from Melbourne to Dubai. If this does transpose then it will provide a number of benefits for companies requiring air freight space.

AQIS

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services (AQIS) plays a crucial role in achieving and maintaining access for Australian agricultural and food products to hundreds of markets around the world. They also are critical in preserving the pest and disease free status of Australia's own animal, plant and fish industries.

United Arab Emirates

General Restrictions

All plant and plant products exported to the UAE must comply with Halal, whether certified as Halal or not.

Imported and exported plants and products are subject to inspection. If they do not conform to plant quarantine regulations and law, the consignment is subject to return or destruction.

General Prohibitions

Any plant or plant product contaminated with any quarantine pest, unless if it can be disinfected.

Permits

Export and Import Permit conditions and exemptions specified in regulations implementing Law No. 6, 1979

Legislation

Acts: Plant Quarantine Federal Law No. 6 of 1979

Points of Entry: Transit consignments are subject to the regulations and cannot stay in plant quarantine over 7 days. Consignments contaminated by a quarantine pest cannot pass through in transit.

Certificates

A Phytosanitary Certificate must be issued for all plant and plant products.

Foodstuffs

Food containing cyclamates is prohibited.

Quarantine Body
Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery Resources

Language
Arabic/English

Documentation Required

Documentation	Required
Import Permit	NO
Phytosanitary Certificate	YES
Additional Declaration	NO
Post Entry Quarantine	NO
EX188	NO
EX46	NO
Radiation Certificate	NO

Information dissemination

The information gathered in the Middle East will provide the Victorian Asparagus growers with contact details for exporters, importers, distributors, retailers and trade agencies. These details could lead to potential export opportunities if the information is managed correctly.

The information was gathered by Cardinia Shire Council on behalf of the growers in Cardinia. It will be held by Cardinia Shire, and distributed to the Victorian Asparagus growers with the aim of developing new export markets in the Middle East.

This database is of a commercial in confidence nature and is the property of Cardinia Shire Council on behalf of the Australian Asparagus Council. An abridged version of the database is at

The information will be distributed in electronic format for distribution to individual growers. The management of this database information will be strategic as to the success of developing a new market. This market research is still in its infancy stage. Further development of the industry it will be beneficial, the Asparagus Industry needs to consider sending a representative of the industry back to the Middle East to follow up with contacts made and the commence marketing Australian Asparagus to the key players in the food service market.

If a strategic group approach is not taken and individual exporters commence contacting the leads made in the Middle East, then there is a risk that the contacts may not discuss potential markets as they are cold calling and that the relationship was developed with someone else. It is essential for the next stage that an Industry approach is taken and then after that individuals exporting companies commence developing individual leads.

Itinerary

BEFORE DEPARTURE – Key dates

1. **15th Jan 2001**
Complete the “market entry information check list”. This information will be sent on to our Victorian Government Business Office (VGBO) to assist with business matching whilst over in the Middle East. This form will also assist companies identify areas they need to address before visiting this market.
2. **24th Jan 2001 – 2pm**
Pre departure briefing meeting at Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) office, L45, 55 Collins St Melbourne.
Information on market and exhibition dynamics, protocol, freight etc will be discussed.
3. **2nd Feb 2001**
Provide a media quality photo(s) of product range and a press release on each exhibitor. Our (VGBO) will seek to have this information placed in the local media. DSRD Melbourne will coordinate this for the companies.
4. **9th Feb 2001**
Provide a press release on the Victorian participation at Gulf Foods. The VGBO will seek to have this place in the local media at a later date. DSRD Melbourne will coordinate this for the companies.
5. **Freight cut off dates**
Product to Helman International Melbourne depot
Shelf stable cargo - **10.00am 15th Feb 2001** / for flight EKO69 / dep. 8.40pm
Perishable cargo - **10.00am 23rd Feb 2001** / for flight EKO69 / dep. 8.40pm
6. **23rd Feb 2001**

Exhibitors arrive in Dubai prior to the trade show.

IN DUBAI

7. **24th Feb 2001**

9.00 – 10.00am	Market briefing by the VGBO & Austrade (covers market information and show logistics)
12.00 - 7.00pm	Booth set up
8. **25th Feb 2001**

8.00am - 1.00pm	Trade Show open
1.00pm - 5.00pm	Field Trip 1 - Carrefour, Spinneys and Lal Supermarkets.

Carrefour and Spinneys are the two major supermarket chains in the Middle East and Lal Supermarkets are a chain of smaller supermarkets (i.e. convenience stores).

5.00pm - 9.00pm

Trade Show open

9.00pm - onwards

Gala Dinner for all exhibitors. This is sponsored by the exhibition organisers. Held at the Hilton Club located opposite the exhibition hall. Last trade show, over 1600 people attended the event.



Spinneys Warehouse

Thai Asparagus sold in the Carrefour Supermarket



Dry Storage at Spinneys Warehouse

9. 26th Feb 2001

8.00am - 1.00pm

Trade Show open

1.00pm - 5.00pm

Field Trip 2 - Jebel Ali Free Zone and GAC Terminal
The Jebel Ali Free Zone is a specifically designed area by the Dubai Government which allows businesses to operate as a

wholly-owned entity, without the need for local partnership, without paying any personal or corporate taxes, with the option of repatriating 100% of all profits.

The GAC Terminal is one of the biggest distribution companies in the Middle East. It operates in all areas of distribution right through from dry storage to -24 degree storage.

5.00pm - 9.00pm

Trade Show open



Dubai Fresh Produce Market



Dubai Fresh Produce Market and Loading Docks



Frank Butera with imported Thai Asparagus

10. 27th Feb 2001

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 8.00am - 1.00pm | Trade Show open |
| 1.00pm - 5.00pm | Australian Business in the Gulf (ABIG) Networking Luncheon |
| 5.00pm - 9.00pm | Trade Show open |
| 9.00pm - onwards | Australian Consulate Networking Dinner |

11. 28th Feb 2001

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 8.00am - 5.00pm | Trade Show open |
| 5.00pm - 7.00pm | Booth pack up |
| 7.00pm - onwards | Victorian Government Business Office (VGBO) Networking Dinner |



Sophie Morell - Agricultural and Industry Officer, Cardinia Shire Council and Ala Ghanem - Business Development Manager, Victorian Government Business Office

12. 29th Feb 2001

9am - 12 noon

Gulfood De-brief at the Victorian Government Business Office, with all producers, VGBO and Austrade.

Recommendations

The conclusion of this research into the Middle East fresh produce market, is that for Victorian asparagus to commence exports to the region, that Exporting Companies commence building strategic relationships with the main Fresh Produce Importing Companies in Dubai.

It is recommended that a strategic and comprehensive marketing and exporting plan be developed. This can be done by either the Asparagus industry or by an individual exporter.

- **It is recommended that in this instance that the Asparagus Council undertake this next stage of the project on behalf of the industry. Exporting companies with the Asparagus Council need to develop an industry-marketing plan and export strategy, which will produce a comprehensive and industry approach to developing new (domestic and export) markets.**

The key to succeeding in the Middle East markets is building sound and trusting relationships with those whom you wish to do business. The Victorian State Government developed The Victorian Government Business Office (VGBO) in Dubai, plays a integrated role in the facilitation of business development in the Middle East.

- **It is recommended that this resource (VGBO) be utilised to its full capacity.**
- **It is recommended that a Dubai local distribution agent be identified and a relationship be developed**
- **It is also recommended that a strategic relationship be developed with any Australian Companies, which currently have either an agent or distribution centre in Dubai.**

Further direct market analysis needs to be completed to identify all required integrated processes. The Middle East is a relatively new market for fresh produce from Australia. Many trade experts have recently suggested that the United Arab Emirates could possibly lower key trade barriers providing Australian companies with opportunities to commence business with the booming economies of the Gulf peninsula.

- **It is recommended that a strategic export plan be developed**

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment scientific study of asparagus has provided empirical evidence of the "chemical free" nature of the product. This result has now provided the asparagus industry with a key strategic marketing tool and put it in an extremely strong position to develop new domestic and international markets. With the increasing awareness of agricultural issues such as BSE, Genetically Modified Food and the recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth in the United Kingdom, consumers buying habits and tastes are changing. This opportunity must be utilised to its full capacity, as it provides the industry with a competitive advantage over its main competitors of South America, Thailand, China and South Africa.

- **It is recommended that the research and results from the DNRE study be used as a key marketing tool in the promotion of asparagus.**

Export account for 80% of the Australian asparagus production. Currently the main export markets are Japan, Taiwan and Korea. In recent weeks the Japanese market has started to open to other asparagus imports. This movement in purchasing could have multiple effects on the Australian export industry. There are a number of regions, which are potential markets for Australian Asparagus.

- **It is recommended that market research commence into alternative new export markets.**

The main buyer interest was fresh produce. There was also considerable interest in processed asparagus, in the form of canned, glass jars and frozen vegetable packs. Fresh produce in the Dubai supermarkets was relatively expensive. The consumer tastes in the Middle East lean towards canned and frozen foods.

- **It is recommended that further research be conducted into the feasibility of developing a food processing plant.**

In conclusion, the market for fresh asparagus in the Middle East is feasible. For this opportunity to be further developed into export market, further research and strategic marketing plans need to be developed.

There are a number of new market opportunities in the Middle East for fresh produce, other than asparagus.

Acknowledgments

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Company</i>
• Ms Julie Baylis	Senior Trade Commissioner	Austrade, Dubai
• Steering Committee		Australian Asparagus Council
• Cr Graeme Osborne	Councillor	Cardinia Shire Council
• Mr Des Wynne	Manager - Economic Development	Cardinia Shire Council
• Ms Sophie Morell	Agricultural and Industry Officer	Cardinia Shire Council
• Ms Ruth McGowan	State Coordinator - Horticultural Residue Management	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Victorian State Government
• Ms Chandy Hunter	Client Manager - Food Sector	Department of State and Regional Development Victorian State Government
• Mr Dominic O'Brien	Client Manager - Food Sector	Department of State and Regional Development Victorian State Government
• Mr Jonothon Eccles	Program Manager	Horticultural Research and Development Corporation
• Mr Terry Barrett	Client Manager	HPL Hellmann Perishable Logistics
• Mr Paul Cahr	Managing Director	International trade Show Management
• Mr Frank Butera		Victorian Asparagus Producer
• Mr Joe Vizzari		Victorian Asparagus Producer
• Mr Ala Ghanem	Business Development Manager	Victorian Government Business Office, Dubai
• Mr Peter Deacon	Executive Director	Victorian Government Business Office, Dubai
• Mr Andy Cuthbert	Executive Chef	World Trade Centre Hotel

Contact List

No	Title	First Name	Surname	Position Title	Country
1	Mr	Matthew	Lyne	General Manager - Marketing	Australia
2	Ms	Nortia	Yusof	Marketing Director	Australia
3	Mr	Omar	Omari	General Manager	UAE
4	Mr	Peter	Deacon	Executive Director	UAE
5	Mr	Alfonso	Vastola	Trader	USA
6	Mr	Shin	Kawachi	Liaison Officer	UAE
7	Mr	Jamal	Almishari		Kuwait
8	Mr	Basel	Arrar		Kuwait
9	Mr	Jagdish	Menon		UAE
10	Mr	Anil	Thayuman	Business Development Manager	UAE
11	Mr	Luc	Bleeser	Export Manager	Belgium
12	Mr	Neil	Duncan	Managing Director	Australia
13	Mr	Siamak	Lighvani		UAE
14	Mr	G	Jagadishwaran	Asst. Sales Manager, Hotel Projects	UAE
15	Mr	Brian	Khoury	Managing Director	Australia
16	Mr	Dan	Halloran		Australia
17	Mr	Robert	Cavedon	Chief Executive Officer	Australia
18	Mr	Mark	Felan	International Manager	Australia
19	Mr	Roger	Newman	Sales Manager, South East Asia	Australia
20	Ms	Demetra	Chrysostomou	Managing Director	Cyprus
21	Mr	Michael	Kadamani	General Manager	Australia
22	Mr	Marek	Magdans	Executive Chef	UAE
23	Mr	Mario	Boudagh	Junior Ass. F & B Manager	UAE
24	Mr	Najieb	Khoory		UAE
25	Dr	Rawhi	Faleh	Managing Director	UAE
26	Mr	John	Luce	Purchasing Coordinator	UAE
27	Mr	Adbulla	Hansan Ali		UAE
28	Mr	Jean-Philip	Habib	Export Manager	Lebanon
29	Mr	Mathew	Shajik	Warehouse Manager	UAE
30	Mr	Abbas	Ali		UAE
31	Mr	Hans	Koch	Executive Chef	UAE
32	Mr	Sami	El Kurd	General Manager	UAE
33	Mr	Fabio	De Poli	Italian Chef	UAE
34	Mr	Sathyanathan	Menon	General Manager	UAE
35	Mr	Aashish	Tungare	Business Development Manager	Bahrain
36	Mr	Najib	El-Berbari	Purchasing Manager	Republic of Yemen
37	Mr	Marek	Magdans	Executive Chef	UAE
38	Mr	G	Duraisamy	Managing Director	Coinbatore
39	Mr	Alex	Drioupine	Public Relations Manager	UAE
40	Mr	George	Papas	Managing Director	Australia
41	Mr	Muhamed	Catic	Director - International Business Development	UAE
42	Mr	Thomas	Ulherr	Executive Sous Chef	UAE
43	Ms	Joanne	Cook	Project Manager	United Kingdom
44	Mr	Vijay	Rao Maknoor	Business Development Manager	UAE
45	Mr	Chaouki	Chrabié	Managing Director	Lebanon
46	Mr	Andy	Stephen	Purchasing Manager	UAE
47		Ali		Produce Buyer	UAE
48	Mr	Aijaz	Mitha		UAE
49	Mr	M.m	Afsal	Marketing Executive	UAE
50	Mr	Talal	Arar		UAE
51	Mr	Adrian	Bell	Director	Australia
52	Mr	Jo	Depetro	President	Australia
53	Mr	Hari	Raman	General Manager - Exports	Australia
54	Mr	Peter	McGee	Managing Director	Australia
55	Mr	Francois	Maes		Belgium
56	Mr	Fred	Zavosh	General Manager	USA
57	Mr	Nasser	Sajjadi	Manager	UAE
58	Mr	Wadih	Farha	Director	UAE
59	Mr	Damien	O'Donoghue	Manager, Sales & Marketing, Logistics & Distribution	UAE
60	Mr	Elie	Roukoz	General Manager	Lebanon

61	Mr	David	Dixon	Director of Purchasing	UAE
62	Mr	Jamal	Hussain	Commercial Manager	UAE
63	Mr	Kurt	Koestler	Area Manager - International Sales	USA
64	Mr	Juan Pedro	Hernandez		Spain
65	Mr		Rudy		UAE
66	Mr	Michael	McGrath	Director	Australia
67	Mr	Jayaram (J.R)		General Manager	UAE
68	Mr	Vivek	Dhume	Trading Manager	UAE
69	Mr	Ibrahim	Rasheed	Managing Director	Australia
70	Mr	B.K	Menon	Chief Executive	UAE
71	Mr	Abdul Khader	Asad		UAE