

vegetables

australia

March/April 2014

Don Ruggiero

Crisp lettuce proves
a stayer

Mission possible

Seizing Aussie export
opportunities

Crisis

**Management
Plan**

Averting disaster

**The Hon. Joel
Fitzgibbon
MP**

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AUSVEG Chairman and CEO messages



Geoff Moar

AUSVEG Chairman

We often hear about the tough conditions many in our industry are facing, yet it is not every day these challenges are as starkly illustrated as in the recently-released survey of Australian vegetable growing farms, compiled by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES). The ABARES survey lays bare many significant issues confronting our industry.

The issue of diminishing returns is a concern regularly raised by growers and it's a worry backed up by the survey. According to the data, the average income of Australian vegetable growing businesses is estimated to have fallen to \$103,000 per farm in 2012-13, representing a 29 per cent decrease from 2005-2006. Estimates also suggest average vegetable business profits have fallen from \$60,200 in 2011-12 to a deficit of \$10,000 in 2012-13.

Reduced production volumes as a result of climactic factors were identified by the report as a major contributing factor to this drop in income. The report also found 80 per cent of vegetable growers indicated production costs were the most significant threat to their viability. Additionally, it was revealed that average debt levels among growers have climbed significantly since 2005-06. While we are hopeful this debt will translate in to higher production levels, clearly there are multiple ongoing issues within our industry.

Though there are challenges, I am confident our resilient industry can weather the tough times, and achieve the necessary gains in efficiency, productivity

and profitability. A key to ensuring the future viability of vegetable production in Australia remains the industry's significant investment in research and development (R&D) each year.

On that note, dates have now been confirmed in every state, and the Northern Territory, for this year's Vegetable Levy Payers' Meetings. I would urge levy-paying growers to come along to these meetings and learn about the National Vegetable Levy, how it is being invested, and the exciting research and development currently underway. Details of the meetings have been included in this magazine, as well as the AUSVEG Weekly Update. Relevant flyers have also been sent to growers in each state and territory.

Ahead of the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence in Cairns, I would also urge you to submit your award nominations and give our industry's best and brightest a well-deserved pat on the back. Having become a much-loved part of the Convention, the Awards cover 10 categories, including Grower of the Year, Women in Horticulture, and Community Stewardship. To submit a nomination, go to www.ausveg.com.au/convention.

Geoff Moar
Chairman
AUSVEG



Richard Mulcahy

AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

Demand for safe, high-quality vegetables from the growing Asian middle classes means there are increasing opportunities to capitalise on these export markets. It's a theme regularly touched on by the nation's leaders, and one which is again examined by Shadow Agriculture Minister, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, in this magazine.

As part of a concerted push to link Australian growers with overseas markets, AUSVEG with support from HAL and the vegetables IAC has launched several initiatives which are now underway.

The Export Readiness Program aims to provide growers with relevant and easy-to-understand information as they prepare to send their first shipments overseas. Accompanying this magazine, the Export Readiness Checklist, is among its first outputs, and is essentially a 'to do' list for growers examining international opportunities.

Complementing the Export Readiness Program, the Reverse Trade Mission will again form an important part of the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence in Cairns in June. With buyers and industry leaders from key Asian markets set to attend, the RTM is shaping as a golden opportunity for Australian growers to showcase their wares and develop relationships with trading partners.

Growers looking to export should also consider attending the Exporting to Japan Symposium, which will be held in Cairns on June 22, the day after the Convention. Trade missions to Japan, the UAE and

Hong Kong are also planned for the months ahead.

Amid this export-related activity, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Hayden Moore to the role of National Manager – Export Development at AUSVEG. With his family farming and professional management background, Hayden will oversee the crucial task of facilitating links between Australian growers and export opportunities.

In other news, I am pleased to confirm Federal Agriculture Minister, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, as a Keynote Speaker at this year's AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence at the Cairns Convention and Exhibition Centre. The Minister joins key industry figures including Executive Chairman of Visy, Anthony Pratt, Syngenta's Global Head of Vegetables, Alexander Tokarz, Yara's Agronomic Competence and Training Director, Barry Bull and Bayer CropScience's Christine Brunel-Ligneau as confirmed speakers.

Celebrity scientist, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, will also appear at the Saturday Convention Breakfast. With such an impressive, line-up confirmed, I would encourage anybody who is yet to register for the Convention from June 19 to 21, to do so by visiting www.ausveg.com.au/convention.

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**FRONT COVER:**

The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP

Photograph by John McRae

Editorial

With the first couple of months of 2014 behind us, it is time to keep the momentum going and look towards what is possible for our industry in the months ahead.

A huge focus on export opportunities, particularly to neighbouring countries in Asia, is already generating plenty of buzz among vegetable growers. In this edition of *Vegetables Australia* we unveil a new, regular export column (page 12). The first instalment outlines details of the 2014 Reverse Trade Mission to be held in June, and the Export Readiness Program. This area of industry development has recently been in the headlines, as a result of the Free Trade Agreement that was recently struck with South Korea.

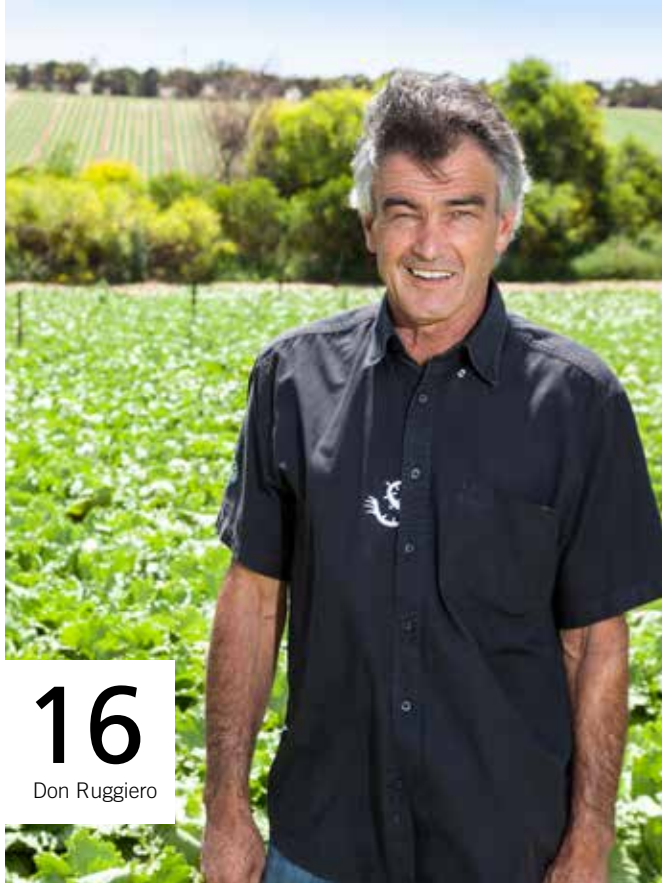
Amidst all this activity comes news of Hayden Moore's appointment to the position of National Manager – Export Development, at AUSVEG (page 14). Hayden will be responsible for breaking open export opportunities for Australian growers, and

speaks to *Vegetables Australia* about tackling the challenge of linking Aussie growers with international buyers.

Following on from the previous edition's feature on Federal Agriculture Minister, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, in this issue of *Vegetables Australia*, we talk to the Shadow Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP (page 26). In a comprehensive question and answer session, Mr Fitzgibbon says he is focused on securing the future of agriculture and food manufacturing in Australia, while holding the current Government to account.

In the field of research and development, we examine the latest findings from the Project Harvest consumer reports (page 28). We also take a look at Nuffield Scholar Scott Samwell's report on the fascinating field of fusion farming (page 40).

For our regular grower profile, we speak to South Australian Don Ruggiero (page 16). The lettuce, cauliflower and broccoli grower offers some valuable insights into the trials



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Don Ruggiero

and tribulations of creating a successful vegetable brand.

Meanwhile, young Queensland grower Mitch Moffatt discusses his daily work at Moffatt Fresh Produce, as well as his plans for the future in the vegetable industry (page 30).

In EnviroVeg updates, Victorian grower Frank Provenzano is profiled on page 20, where he discusses his on-farm strategies around pest-management and biosecurity. In EnviroNews, we outline Bayer's commitment to IPM strategies (page 18).



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The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP



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Centres abuzz with honey bee research

TOP SPEED

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Veggie bites

Facts & figures...

1 kg

The average consumer typically purchases 1kg of cabbage, as recorded by the Project Harvest December 2013 report.

1 million km²

The approximate area of the Murray-Darling Basin, according to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website, 2013.

17th

Orange carrots were first introduced during the 17th century in Netherlands as a tribute to the ruling house of Orange.

7 grams

For every additional 7 grams of fibre consumed per day, the risk of cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease significantly decreases, according to research published by the University of Leeds, UK in December 2013.

44%

The percentage of surveyed consumers who added Chinese cuisine to their cooking repertoire in the past five years and used fresh vegetables, according to ongoing Project Harvest research.

3.4kg

The weight of the world's heaviest beetroot grown by Ian Neale from Somerset, UK in 2001.

8

The number of days respondents expect zucchini to stay fresh, as recorded by the Project Harvest December 2013 report.

Coles Smart Buy frozen vegetables have been replaced with 100 per cent Australian grown vegetables.

100%

Biosecurity brief



with Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene

IN THIS INSTALMENT OF *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA'S* SERIES ON BIOSECURITY, AUSVEG BIOSECURITY ADVISOR DR KEVIN CLAYTON-GREENE DISCUSSES THE BIOSECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE.

R&D
Farm Productivity,
Resource Use
& Management

Given exports and imports are likely to increase as a result of the push to establish Free Trade Agreements, does the likelihood of more produce coming in to Australia increase the likelihood of incursions?

As we do more and more trade, and import more, we have to realise there is a risk of more incursions. Our Government has defined its level of risk and put a statistical probability on the risk level. If it's statistical, obviously once you get up in the high numbers, the likelihood of an incursion or detection will increase. Zero risk would mean zero trade and I don't think that anybody is advocating that.

What implications would a biosecurity incursion resulting from imports have for Australian growers looking to export?

It's case by case. It depends on where the incursion is and it depends on the country receiving the exports, and if the pest is of concern to that country. Once an incursion is

found, procedures are followed. One of those is that our Chief Plant Protection Officer notifies other countries. It may then be that all or some of those countries, until they get further information, impose trade bans because they don't have that pest. If it is geographically distinct, like say Tasmania, they might choose to not take anything from Tasmania but decide the rest of Australia is OK. It also depends on the pest and whether or not it is present in the importing country. If it is already present, trade repercussions are unlikely with that particular destination.

The situation described above is a direct effect, however there are also indirect effects arising from a loss of trade, even if it is only temporary. An indirect effect can be that once a ban on Australian imports is in place, importers of our products will seek other suppliers. These other sources may become an alternative supply even if a trade ban is lifted. Markets once lost are a lot harder to regain and sometimes are never regained.

Given many Australian vegetable producers are keen to capitalise on export opportunities, what biosecurity issues do they need to consider

before shipping product overseas?

Before export can occur there has to be a protocol addressing any plant health issues between Australia and the destination country. This is negotiated on a government-to-government basis and establishes what needs to be done to comply with the importing countries' requirements. It is a mirror image of the procedure for importing into Australia.

Thus there aren't necessarily biosecurity issues for Australia with exports because the produce is going overseas. The issues are more about if there are phytosanitary issues we might face while exporting, and whether the product we are sending fits with the phytosanitary programs of other countries.

The pest or disease suite in a destination country, as well as the source in Australia, also comes in to play. Some destination countries have got strict phytosanitary requirements, such as Taiwan and South Korea, and some aren't as strict. Others, such as Hong Kong and Singapore are completely open. One always needs to be certain that restrictions on imports and exports are not being used as non-tariff trade barriers.

Biosecurity should not be an excuse for stopping trade if it is not warranted by the risk.

How do we strike the balance between imposing our own biosecurity requirements on imports and meeting another country's biosecurity requirements for exports?

The issue is that whatever we demand of other countries to bring produce in, they can demand of us to send. If you're from another country, I can't ask you to do loads of testing if I'm not prepared to do it on produce that I'm sending you.

Conversely, are they the sort of measures we would be prepared to impose upon ourselves in our own domestic trading? Again, we can't demand from other countries, any more stringent conditions than those that we would apply to ourselves, within Australia.



Biosecurity manuals are available through the Plant Health Australia website: www.planthealthaustralia.com.au.
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Project Number: VG11013

Biosecurity: It begins on your farm



IN THIS FIRST INSTALMENT OF A REGULAR COLUMN EXAMINING BIOSECURITY ISSUES, WE LOOK AT THE IMPORTANT PART BIOSECURITY CAN PLAY IN PROTECTING A GROWING BUSINESS.

Biosecurity may not rank as a vegetable grower's primary concern, however, the threat posed by exotic pest and disease incursion cannot be ignored. With Australia's biosecurity risk growing, trading partners are tightening their import standards to compensate. If the Australian vegetable industry is to maintain its domestic and international market access, it must acknowledge the psyllid in the room.

Population growth, increased trade and passenger volumes, and increasing imports from more and more countries are all contributing to a growing biosecurity risk, despite Australia's geographical isolation. According to Global Eradication and Response Database records, the number of exotic pest and disease eradication programs implemented in Australia over the past two decades has increased dramatically.

Eradication programs are

often intrusive, and in a number of cases involve large-scale crop destruction. Occasionally, they don't work at all. When eradication efforts fail, the long-term impact of containment and management can obliterate farming livelihoods. Prevention is the key to decreasing biosecurity risk and increasing the probability of cost-effective management with a minimised impact on production.

Many pests and diseases are carried in plant and soil material moved from place to place by people, equipment and machinery. To limit this risk, you can:

- Maintain a Visitor Register which facilitates trace-back in the event of an incursion, aiding the identification of potential sources.
- Install farm-gate biosecurity signage identifying your property as having a biosecurity management plan in place, reminding visitors to be aware of biosecurity risks.

- Brief workers, contractors and visitors of your biosecurity measures, ensuring people entering your farm are well aware of biosecurity threats and increasing the likelihood of early plant-pest or disease identification.
- Ensure employee and visitor footwear and clothing is free from soil and plant material before entering or leaving your farm. Provide scrubbing brushes, footbaths, boot covers and protective clothing to prevent the dispersal of foreign soil and plant material.

Farm inputs, including planting material, fertilisers, seed and waste, can be a hotspot for pests and diseases. To limit this risk, you can:

- Purchase only from reputable suppliers - preferably ones that are certified, who take biosecurity, hygiene, health testing and record keeping seriously.
- Check planting material thoroughly for evidence of pests or unusual symptoms and isolate new plant material from production areas.
- Maintain a record of all planting material and farm inputs brought onto the property. That way, if you

experience an incursion, it will be easier to locate the source and prevent further spread.

- Ensure that others along the value chain (fertiliser, seed, transport etc.) are aware of your biosecurity expectations.

The Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) guides the management and funding of responses to emergency plant pest incidents. The EPPRD includes an Owner Reimbursement Cost (ORC) scheme, designed to alleviate the financial burden of incursion management programs.

For example, if you have to destroy your crop as part of a program, you will be entitled to compensation.

If you do identify an unusual pest on your property, report it to the relevant state/territory agriculture agency through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881).



For more information, see the Plant Health Australia website: www.planthealthaustralia.com.au, the Farm Biosecurity website: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au, or contact AUSVEG Biosecurity Officer, Dean Schrieke. Phone: (03) 9882 0277 Email: dean.schrieke@ausveg.com.au



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Mission possible: Seizing Aussie export opportunities

IN THIS FIRST INSTALMENT OF A REGULAR LOOK INTO THE WORLD OF EXPORTS, WE EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE 2014 REVERSE TRADE MISSION AND THE EXPORT READINESS PROGRAM.

Following a highly successful debut in 2013, the Reverse Trade Mission is set to make a much-anticipated return. Building on the promising results of last year's inaugural event, the 2014 Reverse Trade Mission will once again help establish and improve professional relationships between Australian exporters and Asian buyers.

While exports to key markets, particularly in to Asia and parts of the Middle East have been gradually increasing (see graph below), currently only two per cent of Australian growers are sending produce overseas. This low figure is in spite of the undeniable growth in international demand for good-quality and safe vegetables. This demand coupled with recent favourable trade deals – such as the Free Trade Agreement

with South Korea – and the strategic location of Australia, create perfect conditions for substantial increases in vegetable exports. With such scope for growth, AUSVEG is determined to increase the number of growers exporting and is committed to creating export opportunities, through events such as the Reverse Trade Mission.

Building on the success of the 2013 Reverse Trade Mission, the 2014 event will bring up to 40 leading produce importers and supermarket buyers from key export markets to the AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence in Cairns from 19 to 21 June. In addition, delegates will tour growing operations, wholesale markets and a retail distribution centre.

Delegates will be representing

the key Australian vegetable export markets of Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. During the Reverse Trade Mission, the visiting party will have the opportunity to meet with export-ready growers at buyers' meetings. These will be a great opportunity for growers who consider themselves export ready to display their produce and allow delegates to touch, taste and smell their wares.

Showcasing Australian produce to leading industry figures at the meetings will undoubtedly benefit the Australian vegetable industry by enhancing networks in these key Asian markets. It

could well be the first step in fostering real export business opportunities in countries where trade can require commitment, as well as a certain amount of effort to maintain professional relationships.

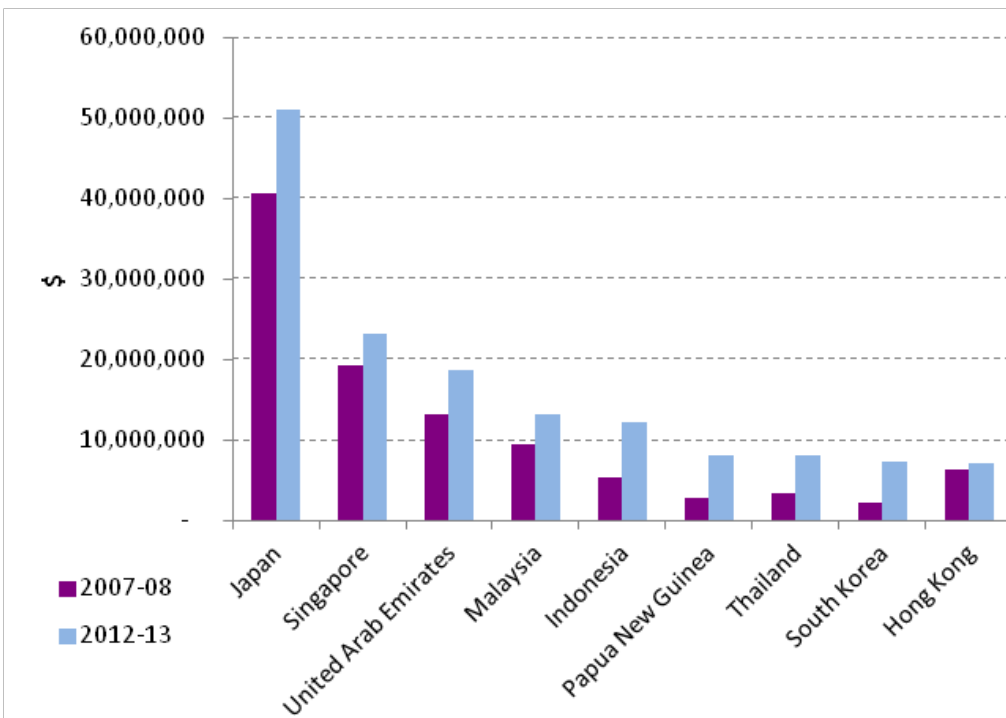
Following the AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence the Exporting to Japan Symposium will also go ahead in Cairns. Held on 22 June 2014, the event will build on the success of the 2013 Exporting to China Symposium. Japan is currently the largest importer of Australian vegetable produce in the Asia-Pacific, surpassing New Zealand as Australia's largest export market. This symposium will increase understanding of the Japanese market and Japanese consumers, and provide insight into successful business approaches.

The 2014 Reverse Trade Mission is an exciting networking opportunity for growers who are currently exporting, or looking to export to Asian markets.



R&D
Market &
Value Chain
Development

R&D
Consumer
Alignment



i For more information regarding the Reverse Trade Mission:
 AUSVEG
 Phone: (03) 9882 0277
 Email: info@ausveg.com.au
 Project Number: VG13035

Are you 'export ready'?

Taking those first steps into the world of exports can be daunting. With that in mind, a new program is now underway to assist growers looking to take the plunge. Aimed at vegetable producers planning to send their produce overseas, the Export Readiness Program will result in the development of key resources to assist in the all-important task of becoming 'export ready'.

An 'Export Readiness Checklist' containing key information to help simplify export requirements, is a key component of the project. Accompanying this edition of *Vegetables Australia*, the

document is essentially a 'to do' list, which can be ticked off at each stage of the process.

The checklist has been developed based on information sourced from relevant trade bodies, such as Austrade, as well as grower feedback. The document is an industry-specific tool that deals with industry exporting issues, rather than generic export readiness information.

As part of the Export Readiness Program, a guide to the export process has also been created to accompany the checklist. The information contained in the guide will help

answer any questions that arise whilst completing the checklist. AUSVEG will also be providing a range of export readiness information online, including the readiness checklist and the more-comprehensive export guide.

Export seminars will also be held in late March, where the checklist and common export concerns will be discussed.

Chef Callum Hann showcases fresh Australian produce to delegates during the 2013 Reverse Trade Mission.



For more information regarding seminars and the Export Readiness Program:
AUSVEG
Phone: (03) 9882 0277
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Project Number: VG13067

Calendar of key 2014 export events:

March 19 to April 7 – Export seminars in the Northern Territory, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland

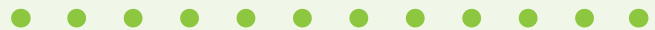
Darwin, NT
Wednesday 19 March
3:00-7:00pm
Berrimah Farm

Cranbourne, Victoria
Monday 24 March
2:30-6:30pm
Amstel Golf Club, 1000
Cranbourne Frankston Road

Devonport, Tasmania
Tuesday 25 March
11:00-3:00pm
Gateway Hotel, 16 Fenton St

Wanneroo, WA
Thursday 27 March
2:00-6:00pm
Joondalup Resort, Country
Club Blvd, Connolly

Gatton, QLD
Monday 7 April
2:00-6:00pm
Gatton Research Station



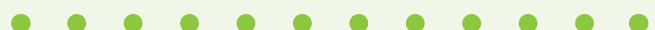
June 16-22 – Reverse Trade Mission – Sydney, Gold Coast, Brisbane & Cairns

June 22 – Exporting to Japan Symposium – Cairns, QLD

September 3-5 – Asia Fruit Logistica – Hong Kong

October 15-17 – Agritech Japan – Japan

November 17-19 – World of Perishables, Dubai International Perishables Expo Middle East – Dubai





More export growth, a priority for Hayden

GROWING UP ON A TASMANIAN FARM, AND EXTENSIVE MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE, MEAN HAYDEN MOORE IS WELL PLACED TO UNLOCK EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS.

Few would deny the opportunities presented by growing export markets, particularly in Asia. The tricky bit for vegetable growers can be accessing them. All of that, however, looks set to change, with the appointment of Hayden Moore to the newly-created National Manager – Export Development position at AUSVEG.

Charged with overseeing the all-important task of identifying and linking vegetable growers with export opportunities, Hayden's appointment is part of a concerted push to capitalise on exports in 2014 and beyond.

Hayden says that growing up on a Tasmanian farm, coupled with his significant on-the-job management experience, means he is more than up to the task.

When not investigating export opportunities for growers, 29-year-old Hayden's hands are kept full raising his three-year-old daughter Ada, with wife Sarah in Hawthorn.

Between work and family commitments, he also enjoys nothing more than loading up the family car for a spot of camping, in some of Victoria's most picturesque locations.

As the overseer of a range of important export projects including this year's Reverse Trade Mission, Export Readiness Program and leading international trade show delegations, Hayden will regularly liaise with producers, buyers and key policy decision makers. He concedes the task ahead is substantial but insists, with the right combination of networking, negotiating

and sheer hard work, golden opportunities can be unlocked.

"I think there are great export opportunities out there, but there are still many challenges that our growers face – whether they be cultural or regulatory or policy," says Hayden.

"Fundamentally, I see the key to the role being linking people up, so they are aware of the opportunities that are available." "Ultimately, it's going to be about overcoming challenges and building relationships between buyers and growers. It's an entire spectrum, from businesses on the ground actually succeeding with exports, to the other end of the scale where we must influence policy and regulations to support growers. There is plenty of room for us as an industry to be more effective across the

whole spectrum."

Breaking open global export opportunities may seem worlds apart from his formative years spent on the farm, but Hayden maintains this strong connection with the land provides the solid foundations necessary to address key issues facing growers.

"I grew up on a farm in far-north western Tassie near Smithton, which is a big vegetable growing region," he says. "My family's background is in dairy and beef, but I certainly enjoy being part of the broader agricultural community. It's great to be across a lot of the issues faced by the industry."

"I think that it also helps with the relationship side of things, because I have dealt extensively with farmers. Hopefully, that gives me some common ground with a lot of the people we

represent.”

It's not just a family farming background that Hayden brings to the role. Having completed a combined commerce and science degree, with majors in plant science, accounting and finance at the University of Tasmania, he moved into a role with global accounting firm KPMG, in Hobart.

From there, it was on to a position in the organisation now known as Tasmanian Irrigation Schemes, where he again spent plenty of time working with farmers.

“During that time, I worked on the successful Meander Dam Development, south of Deloraine,” he says. “I looked after pricing and selling irrigation water. It involved project management and helping farmers make investments in their farm's water security. So I was working with them pretty closely during that time.”

“An important part of that role was to keep an eye on economic trends in agriculture, because water sales in the irrigation developments were largely dependent on how much the farmers could make, traded

off against the increases in their cost of production.”

Having more recently worked at Melbourne Water, where he held a pricing and commercial position that included dealing with the provision of recycled water to the Werribee Irrigation District, Hayden has now stepped on to the global export stage at AUSVEG.

Despite the relative freshness of the role, significant projects, including the Export Readiness Program, the 2014 Reverse Trade Mission and plans for Australian trade missions to Japan, Hong Kong and Dubai later in the year, are already well advanced.

“Even early on in the role, my perception is that there are great export prospects for the industry,” says Hayden.

“For that to happen though, we actually need to get people on the ground realising these opportunities. I'm really keen to ensure the focus on exports continues to grow, because it is a new area for a lot of people.”

“Starting this concerted focus at AUSVEG is really important. We just need to get some runs on the board and really break open the opportunities.”



Photographs by Luka Kauzlaric.

“ Even early on in the role, my perception is that there are great export prospects for the industry. ”

- Hayden Moore.

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Crisp lettuce proves a stayer for Don

ALMOST 40 YEARS GROWING VEGETABLES HAS TAUGHT SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DON RUGGIERO THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING A STRONG BRAND, WRITES ANDREW MACDONALD.

If you've bought or eaten a lettuce in South Australia or the Northern Territory in the past decade, there's a pretty good chance it's been one of Don Ruggiero's. For the past 38 years, the grower from Murray Bridge, about 75km

southeast of Adelaide, has followed in the footsteps of his parents and worked the land where he grew up. Initially a smaller-scale grower of lettuce and onions, Don's Swanport Harvest business venture took a significant turn when he

embarked on a push to develop his very own 'value-added' product, about 14 years ago.

The resulting Staycrisp-labelled lettuce, which has incorporated packing, branding, distribution and marketing initiatives, has helped transform

Don's business in to one of the largest, if not the largest, producer of the commodity in his home state. Up to six million head of iceberg and 800,000 head of cos, along with about 1000 tonnes of broccoli and smaller amounts of cauliflower,

are now produced by his operations each year.

Undoubtedly, the location of Don's primary property on the banks of the Murray River provides natural advantages as one of the few places in Australia where lettuce can be grown year-round. Incorporating growing sites located in different climactic zones has also helped ensure consistency.

However, to attribute the operation's success solely to geographic good fortune would be to undersell the benefits of developing the Staycrisp brand.

"We developed our own brand about 14 years ago with iceberg lettuce, called Staycrisp, so that's probably our biggest claim to fame," says Don. "Our brand here in South Australia and the Northern Territory is very well known in a lot of shops, so in a lot of shops probably around 40 per cent of iceberg sales is our brand."

"These days we deal with most of the chains. So you're looking at Woolies, Foodland, IGA and also some of the smaller food and veg shops."

Building the brand

Far from simply slapping a sticker on a lettuce, the development of the Staycrisp brand has required significant investment and a series of tweaks along several stages of the harvesting, production and distribution process.

Before ending up on the shelf, the lettuces are cut firm and then packed in to modified-atmosphere packaging in the

field. They are then snap-cooled within an hour of harvest.

This rapid vacuum cooling process has helped improve the longevity of the product, to the point where Don says shelf life can extend beyond 14 days.

By offering to deliver his produce within 24 hours of harvest, Don has also managed to market his brand as an attractively-packaged premium product which also cuts down on in-store labour costs.

Challenges and their solutions

Despite the successful development of the Staycrisp brand, ongoing prosperity isn't assured as the business grapples with the same pressures faced by many in the vegetable industry. Don says increasing overheads from inputs such as power and water, as well as labour costs and diminishing returns are putting

pressure on profit margins.

"We're the largest lettuce growers in the state of South Australia and I suppose we're finding times right now pretty tough, compared to how they were five to eight years ago in terms of profit bottom lines," he says.

"The overheads have caught up with everybody at the moment and I know everybody is in the same boat, but it has been testing for us. Labour is a pretty big one, as it is for everybody."

Despite the trying business environment, Don isn't ready to concede quite yet. Currently in the early stages of developing a line of cauliflower, using a similar approach applied to the lettuce brand, the veteran grower says he is hopeful the new initiative will take off. In the face of testing times, he insists the future of the industry lies in the successful development of 'value-added' products.

"Really I think it's almost the only way forward and if you can't do that, you're going to struggle," he says. "These days it's not always about the product anymore – a lot of it comes down to marketing and brands, and all the rest."

"The hardest thing when you are value-adding, or doing something different is that sometimes it can be hard to convince the people between yourself and getting your product to consumers that it is a great product. So it isn't always an easy road and you can have a great concept and a great product but that doesn't necessarily mean you are going to get it off the ground."

"It can be hard to find people to share your vision, but you just have to back yourself and keep trying. We also are on the verge of developing a value-added cauliflower, similar to what we did with lettuce, so we'll have to see how we go with that."



Photographs by Andrew Beveridge.



Environmental legislation and your business: Resources for growers

In an increasingly complex operating environment, farmers are required to understand a multitude of laws and regulations affecting their business. Unfortunately these are often written in legal or bureaucrat speak, and can be long-winded, with the devil in the detail.

With the rising importance of environmental management as a societal and political issue, this has become an area of increasing regulation for Australian growers. Unfortunately, a complex

multitude of laws and regulations can make it difficult for growers to ascertain their legal obligations. To help, the following article identifies some of the resources growers can access to better understand their requirements under environmental law.

Legislation fact sheets

The Environmental Defenders Offices in each state and territory provide a number of fact sheets which summarise environmental legislative

requirements in plain English. They provide an overview of the national and state legislative requirements in key areas such as water management, biodiversity and planning approvals. For more information go to: www.edo.org.au

responsibility of providing advice to Australian farmers on all aspects of Federal Environmental law.

To contact the Environment Liaison Officer:
Phone: 1800 704 520 (free call)
Email: environment@nff.org.au

Where to go for help

The Australian Government Department of the Environment has an Environmental Liaison Officer on secondment with the National Farmers' Federation in Canberra. The Officer has the



For more information contact the AUSVEG Environment Coordinator.
Phone: (03) 9882 0277
Email: info@ausveg.com.au

Recognising excellence in our industry

AUSVEG is now seeking nominations for the 2014 National Awards for Excellence, to be held on Saturday 21 June at the Cairns Convention Centre. The Awards recognise leaders within the industry and will be a highlight of the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention.

EnviroVeg members are encouraged to nominate for the Netafim Environmental Award and the new DuPont Community Stewardship Award, in particular, which acknowledge innovation in the area of environmental management and exceptional stewardship of on-farm materials. These awards are a great way to acknowledge the efforts of farmers in your community who have adopted innovations in environmental management on their properties.

2014 Netafim Environmental Award criteria

- An individual who has demonstrated a commitment to implement sustainable farming practices on-farm.
- An individual who has developed an innovative solution to meet an

environmental challenge on-farm.

- An individual who has shown leadership in promoting environmental issues in the local and wider community.

2014 DuPont Community Stewardship Award criteria

The Community Stewardship Award is a new award in 2014, which recognises the work of individuals or businesses that effectively manage farm resources and engage with the broader community.

- Individual/business is proactive in developing and/or implementing a system or program of safe storage and use of on-farm materials above and beyond industry standards.
- Individual/business engages in local or national community events/initiatives with the objective of developing wider industry.
- Individual/business demonstrates the responsible planning and management of resources, leading to environmental impacts.



Last year's Environmental Award winner John McKenna.

The AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence are all about providing leaders within our industry with the recognition they deserve, so think about the people in your area who are deserving of recognition for their efforts and let us know.

Also keep in mind that AUSVEG have awards for a number of other categories including Grower of the

Year and the Industry Impact Award, so if you feel there are candidates appropriate for other awards we encourage you to nominate them.

Growers can contact the AUSVEG office and provide a nomination over the phone by calling (03) 9882 0277 or online by visiting www.ausveg.com.au/convention.



Managing change in food production

ONGOING CONCERNS ABOUT RESISTANCE AND CROP PROTECTANT USE IN HORTICULTURE IS CHANGING THE WAY GROWERS MANAGE CROP PROTECTION. A TRANSITION IS UNDERWAY TOWARDS THE USE OF SOFTER AND TARGETED CHEMISTRIES, AND BENEFICIAL INSECTS WITHIN A PRODUCTION SYSTEM, WRITES BAYER CROPSCIENCE HEAD OF NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RICHARD DICKMANN.

Horticultural producers throughout Australia face considerable pressure from issues such as drought, market forces, and the rising cost of energy. As the industry often works with tight margins, change often brings with it considerable risk, particularly in the field of crop protection, where changes to on-farm programs can affect yields and quality if not effectively managed.

At the industry level, crop protectant manufacturers are transitioning toward development of targeted products and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) friendly options for growers, however, encouraging uptake is an issue which must be addressed. This article highlights some of the investments and strategies that crop protectant companies are making to reduce the risk for growers transitioning toward the use of targeted and softer chemistries.

Development of crop

management strategies

Crop protectant companies are investing considerable amounts of money to develop strategies which use multiple, targeted chemistries and incorporate IPM use where possible. Our goal in this area is to reduce resistance issues for the grower and ensure that a product has a longer period of effective use in the industry. Companies are finding it increasingly difficult to find new, targeted chemistry that ticks all the right boxes for effectiveness, environment, consumer choice, and international trade. Therefore, protecting the long-term viability of the tools we have is paramount.

The focus within crop protectant companies, therefore, is now to improve the usage of our products and provide strategies for growers which incorporate sustainable techniques and ensure the ongoing efficacy of our products. We also understand the considerable economic

issues involved in changing a farm production system, which is why companies are investing in trialling different spray strategies for commodities throughout Australia. The goal here is to take the guesswork out of changing a crop protection strategy for the farmer, promote the uptake of practices which benefit the grower, provide for consumer choice, and better secure the long-term effectiveness of products.

Where growers can learn more

Growers can contact their local reseller for more information on various strategies available for the control of different pests and diseases. Crop protectant companies provide regular support and information to these companies regarding trials and strategies for the sustainable use of their products. There are also a number of independent experts who advise growers in the field of IPM who have been

involved in the development of the IPM spray strategies available to growers.

The National Vegetable Levy-funded 1800 Agronomist service – 1800 247 666 - is also available to growers seeking free and independent advice on issues such as the use of IPM and resistance management strategies.

In the future

Crop protectant companies will continue to invest in targeted spray strategies in response to market changes at the consumer level, and to support the sustainability of the associated farming enterprises. Development of these strategies benefits the growers in that trial work has been completed, meaning the transition to new chemistries on-farm carries significantly less risk to the individual grower.

To learn more about upcoming launches and trials, contact your local reseller or agronomy company for further information.



A frank discussion about biosecurity

A SWITCH FROM TRADITIONAL MARKET GARDENING TO SEED TRIALS PUT THE FOCUS ON BIOSECURITY AND INCURSION MANAGEMENT FOR FRANK PROVENZANO. HIS APPROACH SHOWS HOW AN EFFECTIVE DISEASE PREVENTION AND BIOSECURITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IS WITHIN REACH OF ALL AUSTRALIAN GROWERS.

Frank Provenzano works the same ground his father worked 50 years ago, in Bacchus Marsh on the outskirts of Melbourne. While the business has changed over the years, many of the methods used to manage pests and diseases have not.

It was in 2010 that Frank decided to take a job with a large seed company and to use his property for seed trials, moving away from a reliance on traditional market gardening.

In the coming weeks, the farm will play host to a field day expo, attracting growers and supply chain members from throughout Australia. Current trials on the property include brassicas, cauliflowers, cabbages and lettuces, which must be effectively managed to ensure they remain healthy and disease free.

These days the property is used almost exclusively for seed trials, putting a firm focus on the effective prevention of

disease, and biosecurity control measures. As a sole operator, Frank is able to effectively manage issues through practices which aim to prevent incursions rather than deal with the after-effects.

Actively monitoring his crop for early signs of pressure and applying water and nutrients to the exact requirements of crops under his care, are keys to Frank's approach. Even within his property, Frank must ensure that the movement of waste and

soil does not cross-contaminate his crop or trial sites. This requires ongoing biosecurity measures such as controlling the movement of machinery within the property and use of footbaths and other controls.

Frank takes a proactive approach to disease management, actively and regularly scouting for signs of pest and disease, so that any incursions can be managed as soon as they occur to prevent plant damage and other

“ We have achieved good results using this method and have had some good trials over the past seasons. ”

- Frank Provenzano.



pressures. Regular plant testing, and the use of soil probes to measure water uptake, ensure water and nutrients are applied to match the exact needs of the plant. “We have achieved good results using this method and have had some good trials over the past seasons,” he says. Focusing on plant health at all times has led to benefits such as requiring less spraying to minimise pressure, as healthy plants offer superior resistance to many common issues.

Frank currently uses a mixture of overhead and drip irrigation systems across his crops. A key concern with crops under trial is minimising fungal diseases, which means less watering at night. Where possible, the majority of the watering is completed in the morning and daytime to prevent waterlogging.

Provenzano Gardens uses a narrow bed technique. This is an older growing method, which was common when

Frank’s father started farming. “Our approach is old-school and works for us from a pest management point of view, for other growers this might be different, but we find it gives good air circulation through the dirt and plant,” says Frank. As part of the production system, compost and humus is used to build up organic matter and bacteria to improve plant growing conditions. Crop rotations are also used, and include green crops such as rye corn, peas and legumes. “This approach works for us, but might not work for all growers

as we are primarily focused on ensuring the uniformity of the trials over yield.”

Plant nutrition, watering and biosecurity practices have assisted Provenzano Gardens to effectively manage pests and diseases on property. A focus on plant nutrition ensures healthy resilient crops, while a focus on biosecurity helps to prevent the introduction and spread of pests creating pressures on-farm. These strategies are more than achievable for smaller operators says Frank. “It’s an easy enough production strategy to manage as a one man show.”



Photographs by Ian Wilson.

Coastal trip for supermarket chief

It's not every day the head of one of Australia's major retailers pops in for a visit. But that's what happened at Coastal Hydroponics last December when then Coles Managing Director Ian McLeod stopped by.

For Belinda Adams, the visit represented a high point in the development of the Gold Coast-based family business, which her parents Barry and Lyn Moss established more than three decades ago.

While the operation has been supplying the retailer with salad products for about 32 years, its involvement with the company has recently stepped up.

Meeting a Coles representative at last year's AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence – where Belinda won the Women in Horticulture Award – set the ball rolling for the visit. After the business was then featured in a Coles publication, Belinda received an interesting phone



Coles Managing Director Ian McLeod poses for a photo with the Adams and Moss families at Coastal Hydroponics.



Belinda Adams (centre) shows Ian McLeod (left) around Coastal Hydroponics.

call.

"I just got a call out of the blue telling me that Ian McLeod was coming to the farm for a visit and wanted to meet us," says Belinda.

A visit from the man who will step in to the Commercial Director position at Coles' parent company Wesfarmers, in July, would be enough to put butterflies in anybody's stomach. For Belinda it was no different.

"Leading in to it I was a bit nervous because I wanted to make sure everything was perfect, but as soon as he arrived he just calmed the room," she says. "He was just really steady and down-to-earth and he didn't make you unnerved. Talking freely with him was easy."

Belinda added she was impressed at the amount of time Mr McLeod spent on the property.

"He was there for at least half the day and basically he was very relaxed and down to earth," she says. "He really took time to speak to each of us. He spoke to mum and dad about the history of the business. He spent time with me, my husband and my brother talking about the future of the business, about how we could work with Coles to grow. Then he was just as interested in the next generation and spent time with the children, talking to them and taking photos with them. It was very special."

"He could see how important being a family business was to us and he asked for honest feedback and was very open. Mum and dad were particularly thrilled because it gave them a real sense of accomplishment, that the business they built up had really achieved something."

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Ask the industry



with Scott Mathew

SCOTT MATHEW, TECHNICAL SERVICES LEAD AT SYNGENTA, PROVIDES TIPS FOR THE BEST WAY TO APPROACH THE TANK-MIXING OF MULTIPLE CROP PROTECTION PRODUCTS FOR SPRAYING.

Some growers must be looking for more hours in the day, because I've been getting lots of calls about the tank-mixing of multiple crop protection products for spraying.

There are many things that need to be considered when mixing multiple products in the spray tank together. Below is a quick list to consider.

Water quality

Available water sources range from irrigation water to rain water, dam water to soak water. There can be a big range of quality variation within these. To complicate things further, the available water sources, water quality and the compatibility of various tank-mix products can change throughout the day's spraying. Some things to remember include:

- Products may be unstable in hard water and react with minerals (e.g. Calcium and Magnesium salts), yet stable in soft water. Glyphosate is one example.
- Other products, like Iprodione, may break down very rapidly in alkaline water (high pH) or react adversely with acidic water (low pH).
- Some products, like paraquat, may precipitate out or be deactivated in muddy or saline water.
- Some may not dissolve in cold water or be incompatible when tank-mixed with certain products in cold water.

The wide variation in water quality, not only between farms but between different water supplies on a farm, can lead to very different compatibilities for the same tank mix.

Formulation quality

Crop protection products typically contain a combination of the active ingredient(s) and other components like emulsifiers, wetters, dispersing agents, thickeners, anti-freeze and anti-foaming agents to improve efficacy, mixing, spreading, sticking, safety and storage life.

You must remember that these formulations can vary between manufacturers or change from time to time. This can mean previously compatible formulations may no longer work together. This is sometimes the case with generic products and certain crop oils and wetters. It is vital to conduct a jar test to determine if new formulations or products react the same way in the spray-tank or in tank mixes, as similar products may have done in the past.

Environmental conditions

Some tank mixes may react differently under different environmental conditions. The quality of some products may deteriorate if they are stored in very hot conditions for long periods, potentially making them incompatible with normally compatible products. Again, it is vital to conduct a jar test to determine how the prevailing environmental conditions may affect the compatibility a tank mix.

Water volumes

In most cases, the use of low spray volumes will increase the potential for physical incompatibility. Always consider using higher water volumes when using tank mixes to avoid problems during mixing and

spraying.

It is also common practice to apply tank mixes of different herbicides, insecticides, fungicides respectively, as well as crop oils or wetters. As a general rule, the potential for incompatibility increases with the number of products contained in the mix.

Mixing order

When tank-mixing multiple products in the spray tank you should always follow the mixing order listed below, and always refer to the product label for specific instructions.

The general mixing order of products should be:

1. Water dispersible granules (e.g. PROCLAIM or SWITCH)
2. Wettable powders
3. Flowable or suspension concentrates (e.g. BRAVO WEATHERSTIK or AMISTAR)
4. Emulsifiable concentrates (e.g. SCORE)
5. Water-based or soluble concentrates
6. Adjuvants (e.g. AGRAL, oils etc.)

It is important to ensure that each individual component of the tank mix is fully dissolved and in solution before the next product is added to the tank, otherwise mixing problems may occur.

Q

For more information or to ask a question, please contact your local Syngenta Territory Manager, the Syngenta Advice Line on 1800 067 108, visit www.syngenta.com.au or email Vegetables.Australia:info@ausveg.com.au. Please note that your questions may be published.

Report casts spotlight on farm finance



THE RECENT RELEASE OF AN ABARES SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS HAS OFFERED IMPORTANT INSIGHTS INTO THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF FARMS. AUSVEG ECONOMIST SHAUN MUSCAT EXPLAINS THE FINDINGS.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) conducts an annual survey of Australian vegetable growers. The survey is funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government. The survey's findings provide important information related to the financial performance of Australian vegetable growers. This article examines the results of the latest survey released in February 2014.

Farm financial performance

The financial performance of Australian vegetable

growers depends on many factors, including levels of production, the prices received for vegetables and the costs incurred during production.

Since 2005-06, total cash receipts and cash costs have tracked similarly, with 2012-13 the exception. This has resulted in vegetable growers' cash income (the difference between cash receipts and cash costs) remaining relatively stable.

However, Australian vegetable growers' average cash income is estimated to have fallen to \$103,000 per farm in 2012-13. This represents a 29 per cent decrease from 2005-06, and is 41 per cent lower than the five year average to 2012-13. According to ABARES, the fall in income was largely driven by reduced production volumes due to less than favourable

seasonal conditions. However, as shown in Figure 1, total cash receipts fell markedly more than cash costs in 2012-13. This suggests that total cash costs have remained abnormally high in 2012-13, which is likely to be a result of rising input costs.

Input costs

The ABARES survey results identified that 80 per cent of vegetable growers are deeply concerned with increasing costs of production and the threat this represents to their future viability.

Hired labour continues to be the highest cash cost for vegetable growers, accounting for approximately 17 per cent of total average cash costs in 2012-13. This was followed by contracts paid (10 per cent),

fertiliser (9 per cent) and seed (7 per cent).

Since 2005-06, vegetable growers' average total cash costs have increased by 64 per cent, despite vegetable production falling by 4 per cent. As shown in Figure 2, the major inputs contributing to vegetable growers' cash costs have all increased when compared to 2005-06. Contracts paid have grown by 157 per cent, electricity prices have almost doubled, while hired labour and fertiliser costs have increased by 62 per cent and 68 per cent respectively. Many smaller vegetable growers are finding it increasingly difficult to operate in this environment, although medium and larger operators are achieving better returns.

It becomes increasingly apparent the size of the

Figure 1: Financial performance, vegetable growers, 2005-06 to 2012-13 (average per farm)

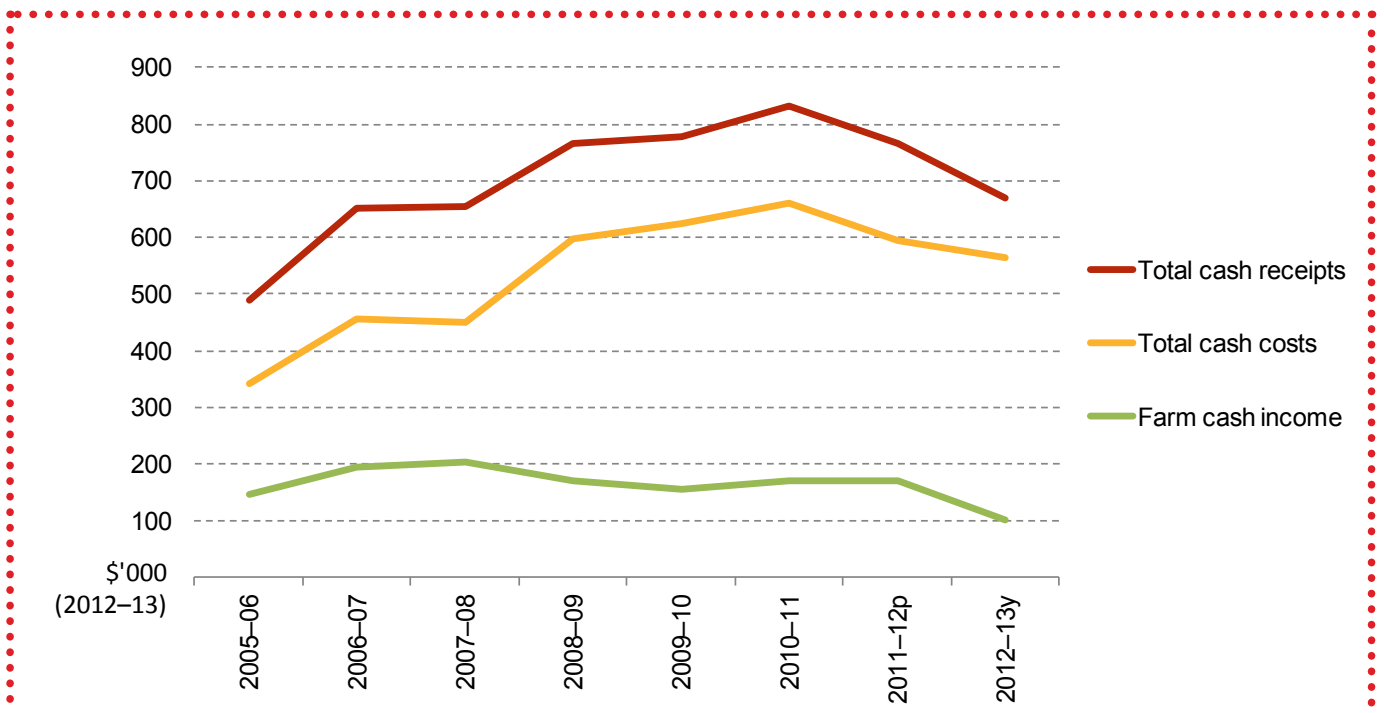
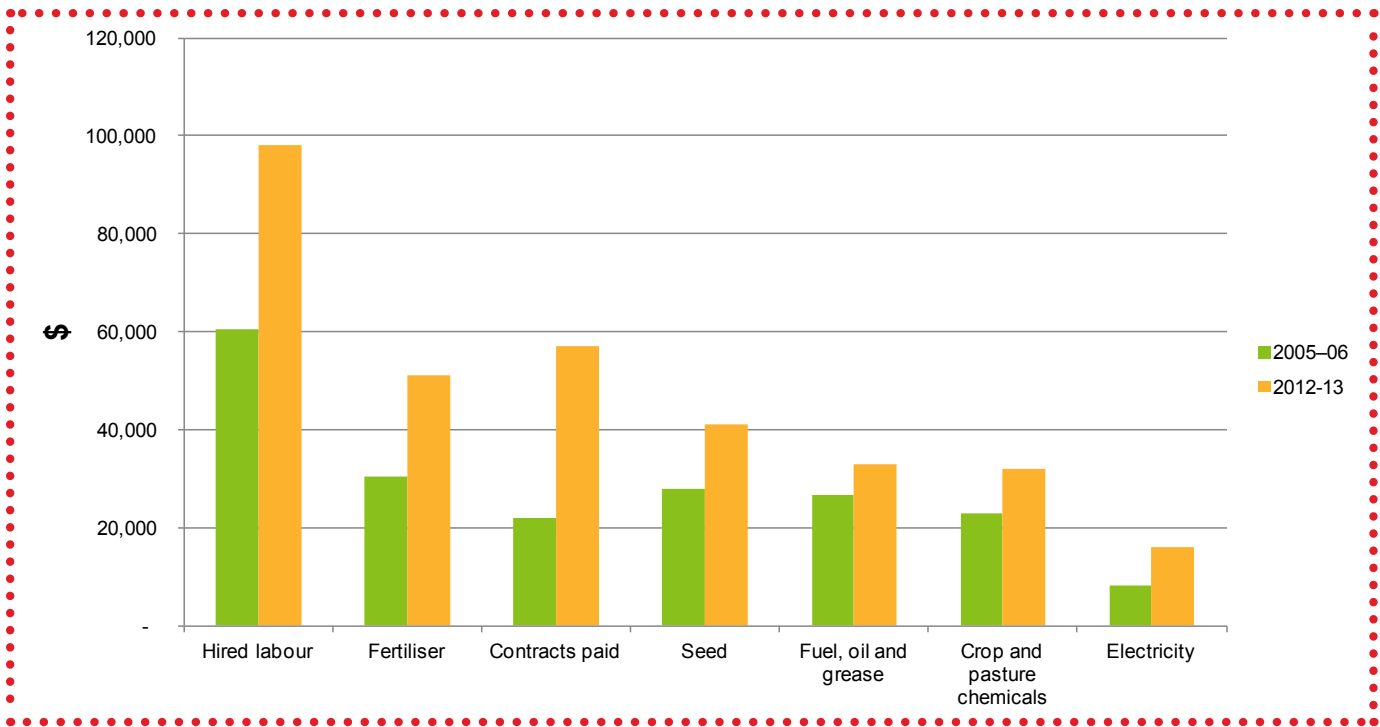


Figure 2: Composition of selected cash costs in real terms, 2005-06 and 2012-13 (average per farm)



vegetable growers' farm considerably impacts financial performance (ranked by rate of return). As shown in Figure 3, the average cash receipts for smaller growers was \$167,400 compared to \$1,680,000 for larger growers in 2011-12. Furthermore, Australia's smaller vegetable growers made an average income loss of \$23,300, medium and larger growers generated an average income

of \$89,400 and \$511,900 respectively. More concerning is the increasing difficulty growers are facing in servicing their debts. The interest-to-receipts ratio provides a robust measure of growers' abilities to service their debts, with a lower ratio being preferable. Despite smaller vegetable growing farms having relatively lower debt levels compared to larger growers,

they are finding it increasingly difficult to pay their debts when measured by the interest-to-receipts ratio. Overall, vegetable growing and operating conditions were not favourable in 2012-13, especially for Australia's smaller operators. However, Australia's larger operators have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve decent returns on vegetable production.

Regardless, all types of vegetable growers will need to continue managing their level of inputs during the production process to ensure costs are minimised, optimum yields are achieved and returns are maximised.

Figure 3: Financial performance characteristics, by rate or return, 2011-12 (average per farm)

	Farm Size		
	Bottom 25%	Middle 50%	Top 25%
Cash receipts	167,400	566,000	1,680,000
Cash costs	190,700	476,600	1,168,100
Cash income	- 23,300	89,400	511,900
Business profit	- 101,200	- 12,500	365,700
Area operated	63 ha	142 ha	316 ha
Business debt	202,200	485,100	742,800
Interest to receipts ratio	10	6	3

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The ABARES survey results identified that 80 per cent of vegetable growers are deeply concerned with the increasing costs of production and the threat this represents to their future viability.
- Australian vegetable growers' average cash income is estimated to have fallen to \$103,000 per farm in 2012-13.
- Overall, vegetable growing and operating conditions were not favourable in 2012-13, especially for Australia's smaller operators. However, Australia's larger operators have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve decent returns on vegetable production.



i AUSVEG: (03) 9882 0277
Project Number: VG12078

This project has been funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.



Shadow Minister sets sights on 'dining boom'

FOLLOWING STINTS IN FEDERAL MINISTRIES, INCLUDING AGRICULTURE AND DEFENCE, THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP IS WELL-PLACED TO TACKLE HIS CURRENT ROLE AS SHADOW MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE. THE LONG-SERVING MEMBER FOR HUNTER RECENTLY TOOK THE TIME TO OFFER HIS VIEWS ON THE SECTOR TO *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA*.

How do you view your role as Shadow Minister for Agriculture?

I see my role as a dual role. First of all, and I have discussed this with Minister Joyce, I want to, as much as I can, take a bipartisan approach to this portfolio, in the national interest. I often speak about what I have come to call the 'dining boom', and I believe agriculture and food manufacturing is Australia's future. On that basis, I think it's important that the political parties work together to ensure that we fully capitalise on those opportunities.

The second part of my role as I see it is, of course, to hold the Government to account. I want to be as bipartisan as I can be but I won't hesitate to give the Government a whack when I

believe they are not acting in the national interest.

What do you consider the most significant challenges facing the Australian horticulture industry?

They are myriad. You have market power, specifically with reference to the retailers, the high value of the Australian dollar, increasing import competition, increasing climatic issues, which I think, some in the agriculture sector may be wrongly choosing to ignore, because if we are going to capitalise on the 'dining boom', it means we have got to dramatically raise our productivity.

That means producing

more food with the same limited people, water and land resources. Some of those resources are depleting and if we don't address that we're not going to reach our productivity goals.

Resource sustainability, productivity and profitability are key. More specifically, the high Australian dollar, import competition and changing consumer choices are impacting on the food manufacturers' supply.

While there are plenty of challenges facing the industry, there are also opportunities. Where do you see these emerging?

Amongst the opportunities is the 'dining boom'. That is the enormous opportunity afforded by growing global food demand.

I think the future of vegetables, and the agriculture sector generally, is in the export market. Making the most of the 'dining boom' is going to mean a big lift in productivity, and that's going to lead to a big lift in investment and by definition and by necessity that's going to mean a big increase in foreign investment. We're going to come to learn that is going to be a good thing for Australia.

The notion of Australia becoming Asia's food bowl is regularly discussed, what steps need to be taken to pursue this?

Again, this is what I call the 'dining boom' and it is the key to our future success. The question is, how we produce up to three times more food with the same, and in some cases depleting, water, land and people resources. Better research and development in the production of crops, sustainability and value adding will assist in Australia's competitive edge in becoming a major player in the Asia market.

The Australian vegetable industry is shifting focus to capitalise on opportunities for export. How did the previous Government support export development and what can be done to develop it further?

The Labor Government did much for the sector's export efforts including the progression of various Free Trade Agreements.

The Food Plan was another important initiative, and the work undertaken in the food plan should not be ignored by the Abbott Government.

With domestic vegetable production costs increasing and more foreign imports entering the country, what actions can be taken to support the local industry?

I mentioned the challenges those in food manufacturing face. The answer is not a hand-out but a hand-up. There is a role for government in helping manufacturers lift their productivity and competitiveness. There may also be a case for assisting those who may choose to exit the sector.

What do you see as the former Labor Government's greatest achievements in the field of agriculture?

I believe history will look favourably on the Food Plan, which was under-sold and a little misunderstood. Labor was willing to invest in Australian agriculture to raise its profile as a leader in the production of high-quality, high-value, safe food. The plan aimed to reconnect the consumer with agriculture production through

community food initiatives and adding teaching about food and agriculture to the Australian curriculum.

Are there any policies you would have liked to have seen implemented during your time as Minister for Agriculture that did not eventuate?

Ha ha, I was only Minister for about 10 weeks, but there is certainly much I want to do! My focus is on the sustainability and profitability of the sector. I would dearly love to find common ground with the Government so that we can sing with one voice on foreign investment. Large inflows of capital will be critical to agriculture's future.

One of the major issues facing agriculture is a lack of young people joining the industry. What is it about agriculture that keeps young people away and how do we get people interested again?

The best way to attract young people to agriculture is to offer quality, secure and well paid jobs. That will largely come through greater corporate involvement and investment in the sector.

Australian vegetable produce is amongst the safest and best quality in the world. How can biosecurity be maintained to ensure the country stays free of dangerous pests and diseases?

Our safe, clean image is one of our great competitive advantages and the maintenance of our reputation is critically important. Therefore, so too is a sound biosecurity framework. It's the last place governments should look for savings.

The Government is moving ahead with its White Paper on the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. What are your views on this exercise?

The White Paper sounds fine but I fear it's just another delay. We want action, not more inquiry. I have, sitting on the coffee table in my Canberra office, no less than 10 recent inquiries and reports in to the agriculture sector, the work and the investigation and the inquiry has been done and it is time for action.



“ I think the future of vegetables and the agriculture sector generally is in the export market. ”

- The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP.



Shadow Agriculture Minister the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP discusses the industry with AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy (right).

Photographs by John McRae.

What should be the Government's highest priority in the field of agriculture?

Lifting the productivity of the sector with a view to fully capitalising on the 'dining boom' through research and development, and building on the work already being undertaken by the broad spectrum of agricultural industry bodies, universities and Federal and State Governments. However, it is vital that the work undertaken is able to be fulfilled and this will be heavily reliant on bigger investment in the agriculture sector.

Korean cabbage cravings could create cash-flow

ONGOING PROJECT HARVEST RESEARCH CONTINUES TO UNCOVER VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION TRENDS, INCLUDING THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN CABBAGE EXPORTS TO SOUTH KOREA, WRITES RACHEL WILLIAMS.

The use of celery in a staggering amount of new food products globally, as well as the potential for South Korean export growth, are just two of the interesting findings contained in the latest reports examining consumer attitudes to vegetables.

Wave six of Project Harvest was released in November, focusing on broccoli, green peas, lettuce and sweet corn. Wave seven followed in December and examined cabbage, celery, cucumber and zucchini – the second tracking of each vegetable.

There had been no major changes to the average quantities sold, and prices recorded, other than seasonal fluctuations for each of the items, except for celery. Many commodities were being purchased slightly more frequently.

Globally there were a massive 1432 new products containing celery launched, but just one of those was in Australia – perhaps highlighting an undeveloped potential for ‘value adding’ or ‘down-stream processing’.

Another key area of focus stems from the South Korea Free Trade Agreement, which is expected to result in an increase in Australian exports of 73 per cent.

Cabbage was a major area of new product development for South Korea and report authors, Colmar Brunton, suggest Australian growers investigate export opportunities to capitalise

on the growth.

Project Harvest is conducted by Colmar Brunton and funded by Horticulture Australia (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

Here are the main findings for each of the vegetables tracked in wave six and seven.

Broccoli

The majority of consumers don't know any specific varieties, indicating an opportunity to engage consumers more.

Broccoli was purchased on average 4.3 times a month, with health benefits listed as the main purchase driver.

There has been an increasing number of half head broccoli and bags of florets being sold. Of 245 new products containing broccoli launched globally, the most innovative launches were for Martha Stewart-labelled multi-vitamins and baby food seasoning.

Value score: 6.3/10
Avg. price \$4.26kg

Green Peas

There was an increasing trend in purchase and consumption frequency - on average they were purchased four times per month (up from 3.6).

The most innovative of the 307 products containing peas launched across the globe in the past three months included



hair shampoo and pea protein chips.

Twenty two per cent of people surveyed expressed some misgivings about cost, with the average price rising from \$12.23 to \$14.52 per kilogram.

Value score: 6.3/10
Avg. price \$14.52kg (snow peas)

Lettuce

Consumption frequency was significantly higher compared with the first wave – with lettuce purchased 4.9 times a month.

A key issue raised by more than a quarter of respondents was that lettuce had a short shelf life, with over a third of bagged lettuce thrown away by consumers. This prompted the report authors to suggest better promotion of correct storage, and alternative recipes.

Out of 129 new lettuce products launched globally, one was in Australia. Innovative new products included green super food dietary supplements, morning salad drinks and a purifying supplement.

Value score: 6.0/10.
Avg. price: \$2.56 ea.

Sweet Corn

There was a significant increase in corn purchased from markets, while in general the average purchase amount rose from 3.3 times a month to 3.6.

Its availability and seasonality were deemed key barriers to purchase – researchers suggest the development of new varieties that have longer shelf life and can be harvested in colder months to reduce price and availability fluctuations.

Individual sweet corn was most commonly purchased and there was a decrease in baby corn sales.

There were 296 sweet corn product launches globally, none of which were in Australia.

Value score: 6.5/10
Avg. price: \$1.23ea.

Cabbage

The consumption of cabbage fell 11 per cent, with consumers buying in smaller formats such as half or minis.

The vegetable is deemed potentially at risk of being replaced by more novel varieties such as kale. Researchers suggest the industry should explore new ways of making



perhaps explaining the trend towards consumers buying more half bunches.

Value 6.1/10
Avg. price: \$4 each

Cucumber

Taste was the key trigger to purchase but the main barrier was short shelf life.

Cucumber scored the strongest future purchase intent for the wave with an average purchase of 4.9 times a month, up from 4.4.

Of 198 new products containing cucumber launched worldwide, there were five in Australia.

Value: 6.2/10
Avg. price: \$4.84kg (Lebanese)

Zucchini

Zucchini is deemed convenient to prepare but trends indicate its cost may be an increasing barrier to purchase, with the average purchase amount of 3.4 times a month, down from 3.8 in wave three.

Value 6.0/10
Avg. price \$5.09kg



it exciting and also look to capitalise on growth in the Korean market.

There were 463 global launches, none in Australia.

Value score: 6.5/10
Avg. Price \$4.78ea.

Celery

While there were 1432 products containing celery launched globally, there was just one in Australia.

The report says celery needs to be promoted more as a healthy snacking commodity.

The top barrier to purchase was size and storage issues,

i For more information:
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Q&A Young grower profile

Name: Mitch Moffatt
Age: 28
Location: Aratula, Queensland
Works: Scott Moffatt & Co / Moffatt Fresh Produce
Grows: Carrots, onions and other vegetables depending on market demands



How did you first become involved in the vegetable industry?

I was born into it. I am fourth generation on the farm here in the Fassifern.

What is your role in the business?

I am a company Director, along with my dad, uncle and cousin. My role is overseeing the day to day operations of the farms, as well as planning our crops and rotation from year to year - which crops go where, when and how much to plant and when to harvest, and coordinating this.

How would you describe your average day at work?

I usually start at about 5am with a trip to the shed to chat to the fellas and make phone calls. Then I either head out to the home farms here or to Gladfield/Stanthorpe, back through Warwick/Allora to check on growers, and down to Gatton and back to the Fassifern, checking crops, irrigating, spraying, or jumping in the harvester/tractor or truck when needed. The day usually ends with a trip to the sheds to check quality, load a truck or two, plan out the next day, and then phone calls to my managers and staff to coordinate the following day. The day finishes anywhere between 6pm and 9pm.

What do you most enjoy about working in the vegetable industry?

Constantly trying to find ways to produce a top quality product and the growing process itself, as well as going into Woolies

anywhere around the country and seeing shoppers grab our products off the shelves, knowing that you're a part of that.

What are the biggest challenges that you face as a grower?

I'd say increasing costs and decreasing prices, as well as the usual weather issues!

You attended the Carrot Growers' Study Tour last year. What did you learn from the experience?

I learnt a lot about different forms of irrigation and things that we may be able to implement at home. I also liked seeing the lack of waste and different ways the larger growers market and package their products. I also got a kick out of realising that the Australian veggies we all produce are among the highest quality in the world in comparison.

What was the highlight of the tour for you and why?

Going to Bolthouse farms in California. The scale they grow on is amazing and they have very little product waste. Also, their branding and marketing is really on point.

How do you think more young people could become encouraged to take up jobs in the vegetable industry?

It is a tough one. I think like all farming families it's hard to keep up-and-coming farmers on the farm. As an industry, I think that more government support for food growers is key going forward into the next generation. Compared to other countries we have very little support for food

security from our government. Also, finding sustainable farming and production practices that can help bring costs down - i.e. implementation of solar. I really hope that we can make farming sustainable in our generation so our kids have the option to stay on the farm.

If you weren't working in the vegetable industry, what would you be doing?

I have a keen interest in trucks stemming from what we do here, so I would probably be in the transport industry.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Hopefully doing what I'm doing now, pushing the envelope and working towards increased yields.



Photographs by Vanessa Mylett.

Local and international talent lines up for convention

Delegates at the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence will have the chance to hear from a prestigious line-up of industry leaders, covering a range of topics from recent developments in research, to the potential of Australian horticulture.

The AUSVEG National Convention is once again attracting worldwide attention, with a number of international guests already confirmed to speak alongside domestic experts as part of the program. Leading industry figures from Europe, Asia and the United States will all travel to Cairns in late June to share their vision for horticulture.

Keynotes confirmed

AUSVEG is delighted to announce that Anthony Pratt will share his views on the industry during the 2014 Convention



Anthony Pratt.



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP.

as a Keynote Speaker. As the Executive Chairman of VISY, Mr Pratt heads up one of the world's most recognised packing and recycling companies. VISY currently employs more than 9,000 people worldwide.

Dividing his time between the USA and Australia, Mr Pratt has a long history of involvement in the Australian horticulture sector, and has stressed the importance of support from other industries to ensure its long-term viability. With approximately 70 per cent of VISY's customers operating within the food sector, Mr Pratt is firmly committed to the future of Australian horticulture.

It is also exciting to confirm that Federal Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, will address attendees during another Keynote session. Minister Joyce has already outlined his plans for 2014, including the development of a White Paper looking at the competitiveness



Christine Brunel-Ligneau.



Alexander Tokarz.

of the agriculture sector, and ways to boost productivity and profitability.

Delegates will now have the opportunity to listen first-hand to Minister Joyce's priorities for the sector and his commitment to ensuring the success of horticulture within Australia.

International outlook

Providing a global perspective, Alexander Tokarz, Head of Vegetables at Syngenta, will travel from Switzerland to address delegates. With over 10 years' experience in the industry, Mr Tokarz is sure to enlighten attendees with his views. A strong believer in Syngenta's key focus of sustainability, Mr Tokarz has previously argued that sustainability must be looked at together with productivity and profitability, instead of being seen as mutually exclusive.

Christine Brunel-Ligneau from Bayer CropScience has also been confirmed as part of the international line up. Currently based in Germany, Ms Brunel-Ligneau works with the entire value chain to achieve the sustainable sourcing of crops. She also developed the Bayer Sustainability Radar for measuring and monitoring the contribution of food chain partnerships towards sustainable production. The program is now being implemented worldwide. Ms Brunel-Ligneau has addressed industry members at various conferences and events around the world, and spoke to Australian growers at Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong as part of the 2013 Young Grower Tour. She also presented to visiting Australian growers at the Fruit Logistica event in Berlin in 2012.

Barry Bull, Agronomic Competence and Training Director for Yara International, will provide a technical session for delegates. An expert in the



Dr Karl Kruszelnicki.

field of crop nutrition, Mr Bull has worked in the industry for over 40 years, beginning his career with the South Australian Department of Agriculture. Based in Singapore, Mr Bull is regarded as a 'guru' within the industry and delegates will surely benefit from his extensive knowledge and experience.

Breakfast special

A new addition to the speaker line-up, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki is also confirmed to make an appearance at the Saturday Convention Breakfast. Best known for his appearances on Triple J, and his outrageously colourful shirts, Dr Karl is a scientist extraordinaire, with degrees in Physics, Maths, Biomedical Engineering, Medicine and Surgery. Delegates will be left enthralled by Dr Karl's enthusiastic approach to science, where no questions go unanswered and no phenomenon remains unexplained. Dr Karl Kruszelnicki appears by arrangement with Claxton Speakers International.

With an impressive array of speakers already confirmed, delegates are sure to receive plenty of 'food for thought' at the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention.

Say 'Aloha' to Cairns!

The Cairns Esplanade will be transformed into a Hawaiian paradise on the evening of Friday 20 June. The Kahaki Luau, proudly sponsored by DuPont, will offer delegates the chance to unwind and relax after a busy day of speaker sessions and networking at the Trade Show.

Literally translating as 'Beach Party', the Kahaki Luau is certain to be an evening of exciting entertainment, featuring leis and hula dancing. A vast array of tropical cuisine will also be on offer, for the foodies at heart.

The colourful evening will be the perfect occasion to get outside and enjoy far-north Queensland's heavenly June weather. With the beautiful coastline providing an idyllic setting, delegates will be treated to a Hawaii-like experience, without having to leave

Australian shores.

An opportunity to have some fun, catch up and kick up your heels with friends from across the country, the Kahaki Luau will take place from 6.00pm-9.00pm. Transport will be provided for delegates to and from the event. The Kahaki Luau is included in the full delegate pass and tickets can also be purchased separately.



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AUSVEG

2014 National Convention
Trade Show and Awards for Excellence

NOMINATIONS

2014 AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence

The 2014 AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence will be held on Saturday, 21 June at Cairns Convention Centre and will highlight the outstanding achievements of our industry's most successful growers, researchers and businesses across the supply chain. This event is set to be a highlight of the highly anticipated 2014 AUSVEG National Convention.

Nominations are being sought in the following categories:

Grower of the Year

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Environmental Award

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Rising Star of the Year

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Trade Display of the Year Awards (Multi-booth and Single-booth)

*The Trade Display of the Year Awards are not open for nomination.
All exhibitors are deemed entrants for Trade Display of the Year Awards.

To fill in the nomination form online, go to: www.ausveg.com.au/convention

For more information please contact AUSVEG

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Special editions to tackle the issues that matter



There are plenty of themes and topics in the Australian vegetable industry which are worthy of analysis and discussion. While the point of this magazine is to communicate and cover as many of these issues as possible, there are undoubtedly some things which require a more prolonged and in-depth examination.

With this in mind, we are pleased to reveal the next (May/June) edition of *Vegetables Australia*, will herald the return of a specially-themed publication, providing comprehensive analysis of all things irrigation. The decision has been taken as a result of the vital role irrigation plays in the development of healthy and high-yielding vegetable crops. The irrigation-themed special edition will contain a raft of crucial information for those



with a specific interest in this all-important element of the Australian vegetable industry.

Researchers who have carried out specific work in irrigation and water management will have an opportunity to

communicate their findings, while the themed edition will also focus on businesses with a particular expertise in the field.

The themed edition will be a must-read for anybody with a vested interest in irrigation.

It will be complemented by a second special edition of *Vegetables Australia* (November/December), which will focus on emerging technologies.

New appointments at top global agribusinesses

Makhteshim Agan, the parent company of Farnoz, has appointed Mr Chen Lichtenstein as its new CEO and President.

Mr Lichtenstein joined Makhteshim Agan in 2006, serving as its Deputy CEO of China Integration, as well as President and CEO of ChemChina's strategic business division. Before joining Makhteshim Agan, Mr Lichtenstein served as Executive Director of Investment Banking at Goldman Sachs in New York and London.

"I look forward to working closely with Makhteshim Agan's excellent management team, and professional and determined employees, building on our strong foundation to make the most of the exciting opportunities we have," Mr Lichtenstein said.

Meanwhile, over at Bayer CropScience's Australian head office in Melbourne, Mr Anthony

De Monte has been appointed Horticulture and Summer Crops Portfolio Manager.

In his new role, Mr De Monte will lead the horticulture marketing team and will be responsible for implementing

marketing strategies for Bayer's horticulture portfolio including Movento®, Belt® and Teldor®.

Mr De Monte has been with Bayer since 1995 and is excited to continue his work with the company and introduce a new

range of products to market.

AUSVEG wishes both Mr Lichtenstein and Mr De Monte success in their new roles.



Mr Chen Lichtenstein.



Mr Anthony De Monte.

Centres abuzz with honey bee research



Flowering strips and insect hotels promote the need to provide pollinators with food, shelter and nesting opportunities.

BEE CARE CENTRES IN GERMANY AND THE USA HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THREATS TO NATIVE POPULATIONS ON THE TWO CONTINENTS.

The honey bee has a key role to play in the world of horticulture. The pollination performed by the creatures is crucial to the survival of a significant range of the world's food crops and flowering plants. Recent high mortality rates among some populations in the United States and Europe have sparked plenty of concern. While a combination of factors, including diseases, parasites, agricultural practices and environmental and climatic issues are understood to have contributed to the worrying decline, a fix-all solution is yet to be found. While Australia's bee population remains relatively healthy, vigilance and biosecurity awareness is critical if this is to remain the case.

In an effort to better understand the issues confronting honey bee populations globally, Bayer has established two specialist Bee Care Centres – at Monheim in Germany and in North Carolina, USA. Europe-based Bayer Bee Care Centre Communications & Government Affairs Manager, Dr

Julian Little, took some time out to discuss the state-of-the-art facilities and issues confronting the world's bees with *Vegetables Australia*.

About the centres

The Bayer Bee Care Centre in Monheim, Germany was set up in 2012 as a means of consolidating existing and future bee health projects. The centre employs a team of scientific experts and specialist beekeepers, whose role it is to improve understanding of the issues facing populations and to promote bee health initiatives. The centre also aims to stimulate discussion and communication with affected parties and works with external partners on joint projects. The second Bayer Bee Care Centre, in North Carolina, opened its doors in 2013.

Key threats

While a range of factors are believed to be influencing the



health of bees in Europe and North America, Dr Little said the Varroa mite was a significant contributing factor in population declines in those regions.

"A combination of factors, including the provision of food and nesting sites, the weather, a whole plethora of viruses and other diseases is certainly taking its toll," said Dr Little. "For the honey bee, there is also the Varroa mite – a particularly nasty parasite that not only sucks the blood of the bee but also spreads these viruses. [It's] a bad combination that will frequently reduce the life of a worker bee by a third and may lead to the complete failure of a colony in bad years. In reality, there is no single reason for overall poor bee health although it is clear that the presence or absence of significant infestations of the Varroa mite, and particularly treatment-

resistant Varroa, is particularly culpable in this issue."

Although some concerns have also been raised about the impact of pesticides on bee health, Dr Little said a recent European Commission-investigated survey of both beekeepers and investigative laboratories, canvassing views on why colonies were being lost, suggested diseases and Varroa, along with general problems were widely regarded as major contributing factors.

"Pesticides figured as a very minor problem, and much less than deliberate poisoning of bees," said Dr Little. He added that some work on the effects of some insecticides on bee populations was ongoing.

Research work

With Varroa continuing to cause concerns, Dr Little said much

of the work carried out by the Bayer Bee Care Centre had focused on addressing threats posed by the damaging mite. He added one key project was the development of a 'Varroa Gate' – essentially a front door attached to prevent the re-infestation of clean hives. "These are currently being trialled by beekeepers across Europe and also in the USA, where bee health is more of a concern," he said.

Good nutrition is also seen as key to bee health and Dr Little said work had been done with the planting of flowering strips to provide food, nesting and shelter habitat for pollinators. "Through various projects, we reach out to the general public, and also through our model farms where we demonstrate that flowering strips can be a sustainable part of good farming practice," he said. "By working with and listening to beekeepers, we are able to look for solutions to improve bee health together. This includes providing support and advice when they have beekeeping-related questions or want to

know more about our work." Dr Little said the centre continues to invest in product stewardship, and research into the responsible use of crop protection products, to minimise the impacts on honey bees. "In addition to these activities, we are also working with renowned bee scientists in joint research collaborations to understand more about deadly viruses and diseases such as nosema, so that we can work on finding solutions to improve bee health in these areas too," he said.

Issues for Australia

Though Australian bee populations have not been plagued by the significant mortality issues which have beset some northern hemisphere colonies, Dr Little said it was vital strict biosecurity measures remained in place here to ensure our populations stayed the healthiest in the world. He added a combination of factors in Australia, including, to date, the absence of Varroa,

offered interesting insights to scientists. "The fact that Australia, where neonicotinoid insecticides are widely used as seed treatments in canola, summer crops and horticulture, has the healthiest bees on the planet and no Varroa, at least at the moment, is not lost on bee scientists," he said. "Maintaining its excellent biosecurity vigilance to stop Varroa coming into Australia is absolutely critical to the safeguarding of bee health in Australia."



Models add interest and help explain a bee's anatomy and lifecycle stages.

Plant virus may be causing the 'beepocalypse'

A plant virus systemically infecting bees' bodies could be responsible for a decline in bee populations around the world, according to a study conducted by US and Chinese researchers.

Tobacco ring spot virus (TRSV) showed up frequently in tests of bee viruses, prompting researchers to investigate whether the plant pathogen could infect bees.

"The results of our study provide the first evidence that bees exposed to virus-contaminated pollen can also be infected, and that the infection becomes widespread in their bodies," said the study's lead author, Jilian Li of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science in Beijing.

Bees, which are vital to the development of many vegetable crops, have been affected by a



European honey bee with a Varroa mite on its back. The mites cause death and disease in bee colonies. - Image courtesy of Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

sudden collapse in population in recent years. This is known as colony collapse disorder. The loss of honey bees could have dramatic consequences for food production, with over three-quarters of the world's food crops requiring insect pollination.

About five per cent of known plant viruses are pollen-transmitted and therefore potential sources of host-jumping viruses, according to

the report.

The researchers studied bee colonies classified as either strong or weak, and found viruses, including TRSV, were more common in the weak groups. Colonies with high levels of multiple viral infections started failing in late autumn in the northern hemisphere and perished before February, while hives with fewer infections survived the entire cold winter months.

TRSV was also found in Varroa mites, a parasite that transmits viruses between bees while feeding on their blood.

"The increasing prevalence of TRSV, in conjunction with other bee viruses, is associated with a gradual decline of host population and supports the view that viral infections have a significant negative impact on colony survival," the researchers wrote.

The what, where and why of vegetable imports

NEW RESEARCH PROBES THE NATURE, ORIGINS, VOLUME AND VALUE OF VEGETABLE IMPORTS, AND THE REASONS THEY OCCUR.

Concerns over increasing imports are regularly raised in the Australian vegetable industry and few would deny the difficulties some local growers face competing with the cheaper overseas imports, particularly where processed products are concerned.

While imports of some categories and varieties of vegetables have climbed significantly in recent years, it is not always clear why.

A recent project entitled *Understanding the Nature, Origins, Volume and Values of Vegetable Imports* has been undertaken to determine the factors driving vegetable imports, and responses available to the industry.

The project, conducted by RMCG researchers Donna Lucas and Luke Rolley, was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

Methods and figures

Based on a combination of Harmonised Security (HS) code data, domestic wholesale price data, domestic production information and consultation with industry, an interim report for the project contains information relating to the cost and levels of imports, as well as domestic production of various vegetable commodities.

According to the report, in 2012 there was a total of 4,432 tonnes of fresh produce imported into Australia, with 86,636 tonnes of frozen and 47,483 tonnes of processed vegetables brought in, for a total of 108,905 tonnes of imports during that year.

The numbers refer to beans, capsicum, cauliflower/broccoli, peas, sweetcorn and mixed/other vegetables. By comparison, total domestic

production of these varieties was estimated at 263,746 tonnes.

By commodity, about 9209 tonnes of frozen beans, 20,800 tonnes of frozen peas, 10,581 tonnes of frozen sweet corn and 46,046 tonnes of frozen mixed/other vegetables were imported.

The report identifies the main countries supplying produce to Australia as New Zealand, China and Thailand for corn, and Italy for peas. Furthermore, while fresh imports are relatively low compared to domestic production, frozen and processed imports are significant.

Over the years

Comparing the volume and values of fresh, frozen and processed imports between 2006 and 2012, the report notes the importation of all frozen and processed varieties listed increased over the period. There had also been little increase in the price of imported goods from 2006 to 2012, and in half the categories, prices had actually decreased.

According to the data, imports of fresh beans jumped from 478 tonnes in 2006 to 749 tonnes in 2012, while fresh capsicum imports fell from 2219 tonnes to 1756 tonnes.

Meanwhile, frozen bean imports jumped from 5176 tonnes to 9209 tonnes, frozen peas went from 16,506 tonnes to 20,800 tonnes and sweet corn increased to 10,581 tonnes from 9,292 tonnes.

Processed pea imports increased from 1136 tonnes to 2185 tonnes, processed sweet corn jumped to 7536 from 5681 and mixed/other vegetables went from 5496 to 8116.

Drivers of the jump

The authors of the report have

identified several specific drivers of import growth. These include:

- Consumers seeking low cost frozen and processed goods and, in the fresh sector, increased counter seasonal supply.
- Retailers seeking to supply low-cost, high-margin goods and increase market share.
- Processors seeking to maintain low costs of production and market share.

Examining specific commodities, the report states 'low price of imported product' is an import driver for fresh and frozen beans, and frozen and processed peas, and sweet corn. Offshoring of processing has also been identified as an import driver for each of the frozen commodities.

It is noted generally in the report that consumers and retailers have a preference for domestically-sourced fresh vegetables where available, and imports of fresh vegetable products generally reflect a

year-round demand for products, which may not grow in Australia across all seasons.

What can be done?

While it is acknowledged in the report that levy-paying growers are not in a strong position to defend against imported products due to retailers and processors taking a global approach to sourcing produce, there are some recommendations for growers looking to improve their positions. For fresh, frozen and processed vegetables, these include:

- Improving understanding of the supply chain, including decision drivers and subsequent links.
- Being aware that Australian growers are competing with growers in other countries and it is critical they understand their strengths and weaknesses, relative to competitors.
- Conducting research,





development and extension to determine where Australia can develop future competitive advantages globally.

- Understanding the market and where there are opportunities for specialty, niche and counter-seasonal products to capture market share.

Recommendations for frozen and processed-only vegetables include:

- Understanding the specific issues of competitiveness along the entire supply chain.
- Being aware of opportunities to influence retailers' policies through pressure from consumers to purchase food products that have minimum labour, environmental and food safety standards.
- Consumers have historically purchased on price for frozen and processed food categories. If consumer sentiment can be influenced to seek domestically

produced frozen or processed categories with a view that they are a premium offering, this would provide a hedge against increasing imports.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The main countries supplying produce to Australia were New Zealand, China and Thailand for corn, and Italy for peas.
- Fresh imports are relatively low compared to domestic production but frozen and processed imports are significant.
- Generally, consumers and retailers have a preference for domestically sourced fresh vegetables where available.
- The report identifies 'low price of imported product' as an import driver for processed and frozen imports in particular.



For more information:
Luke Rolley, RMCG
Email: luker@rmcg.com.au
Project Number: VG12083



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Fusion farming focus for Scott's scholarship report

AN INTEREST IN FUSION FARMING TOOK NUFFIELD SCHOLAR SCOTT SAMWELL AROUND THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF ENHANCED GROWING TECHNIQUES, KAREN SHAW WRITES.

For South Australian Brussels sprout grower Scott Samwell, the biggest lesson learned from visiting at least 30 overseas farms as part of a Nuffield Scholarship, was the importance of looking after the soil.

An advocate of fusion farming, Scott used the travelling scholarship in 2012 to learn about what was happening internationally with organic, biological and traditional farms. "Visiting the farms reinforced that soil is our livelihood. We need to focus very much on protecting and enhancing what we already have on our farms," Scott says.

Scott, his father, brother, uncle and cousin farm more than 500ha in South Australia's Adelaide Hills, producing cabbages and Brussels sprouts for the domestic and export markets. They also run beef cattle.

But Scott is always looking to improve what is happening on-farm without increasing reliance on chemicals. He wanted to learn more about overseas innovations that would fit with his vision for fusion farming, which involves selecting what's best from a range of farming styles and philosophies and using these to create what works on an individual farm.

The idea driving the concept is sustainability and improving soil structure. Scott explains: "It's based on producing a plant that's healthy and uses its natural defences against fungi, bacterial and insect attacks and to complement other inputs such as fertilisers and chemicals."

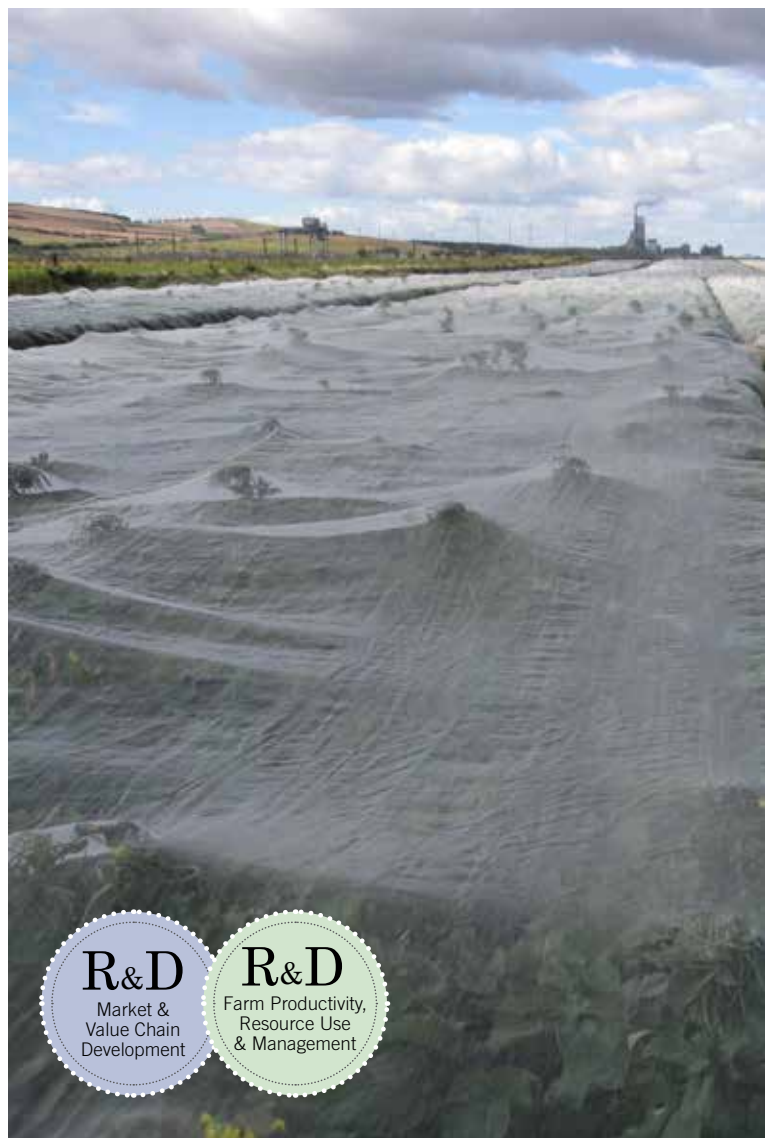
Global perspective

Scott visited many large farms growing Brussels sprouts using traditional methods and fertilisers, but didn't find anyone who was growing sprouts on a large commercial scale who used different methods to conventional farmers in Australia.

"Those who were growing sprouts organically were producing a really poor quality product. If I presented them to my customers, they would be rejected," Scott says. "The sprouts had holes and grub damage."

He did notice an increasing number of farmers' markets, particularly in the US. "For example Madison has a farmers' market every Saturday with 300 plus stalls, but it also has a population of about 240,000 to support the venture," he explains.

"People the world over are



wanting to know more about what they are putting in their mouths, where it's come from and how it's treated," he says. It also reaffirmed Scott's belief that farmers in Australia need to be looking at ways to complement what they are already doing by using more natural means, rather than being overly reliant on chemicals.

For example, in California's San Joaquin Valley, farmers using cover crops, such as triticale, in rotation with cash crops on some properties had increased the organic matter from less than 0.5 per cent up to three per cent in less than five years.

He visited Pennsylvania farmer, Steve Groff, who is experimenting with a range of mixed cover crops, planting multiple species to mimic nature. "I saw plantings of five species including clovers, grasses, sunflowers and Sudan grass, right up to a plot with more than 40 different species," Scott says.

"A biological agronomist in Wisconsin explained that it was better to use compost as a soil inoculant. It was more efficient and cost effective to grow a cover crop and mulch it back in the soil for organic matter," he says.

European style

In Switzerland, Scott was impressed with trials of planting flowers in rows, with cauliflowers and cabbages. "The flowers provide a food source and habitat for natural predators of the Diamondback moth and other species detrimental to the cabbage and caulies," Scott says.

"While there was a reduction in the amount of brassica plants per hectare, the flowers randomly in the crop enhanced the harvest percentage. Natural predators controlled the pests, and the result was a better, cleaner, greener crop."

One farmer in Scotland had resorted to netting his entire 485ha crop because there



Expansive crop netting used in Scotland.

were no chemicals available to control the cabbage root fly and aphids. While Scott couldn't afford to net his entire crop, he sees merit in netting a small area that could be sold as a premium organic product.

Broader lessons

The biggest surprise for Scott was learning that Californian growers use methyl bromide to control nematodes in Brussels sprouts. "That completely shocked me, particularly because Brassicas are a natural biofumigant of the soil. It illustrated just how much they have hammered their soil."

He enjoyed visiting UK farmers, George and Vernon

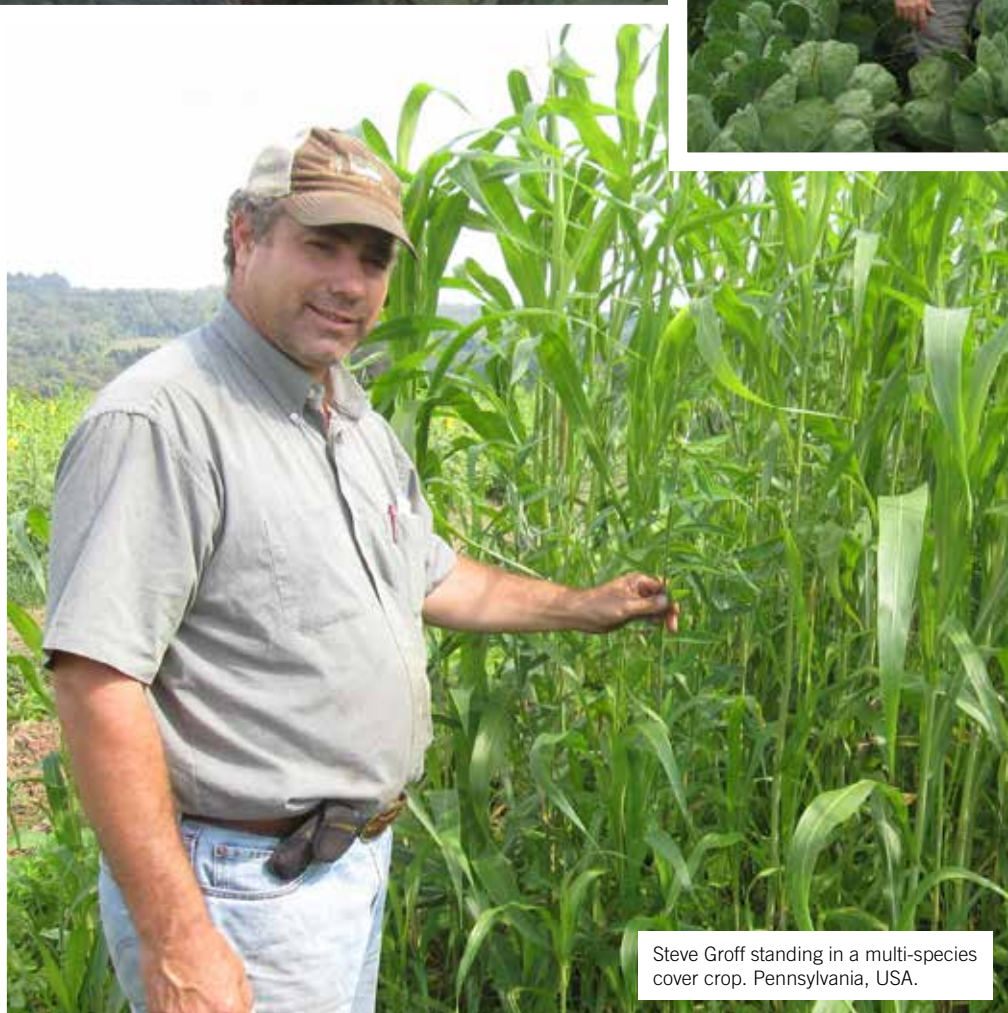
Read, who have installed an anaerobic digestion plant that produces energy to run the packing facility, while the by-products (liquid and compost) are used in the production of vegetables.

Another innovation that impressed Scott was the advancements in cultivating machinery from a company in the UK. "They are using cameras mounted on cultivators, to guide a tractor through fields, removing weeds along the rows and in between plants."

Pleasingly, Scott came home knowing that Australian farmers definitely stack up internationally. "I think our farmers are more aware of the importance of regular soil testing. While we



Scott Samwell (left) with an organic grower in Wisconsin, USA.



Steve Groff standing in a multi-species cover crop. Pennsylvania, USA.

test ours every year, those in the US test every two years and in the UK and Europe every three years."

He has also brought home ideas to trial. As well as a range of cover crops, he's keen to try companion-planting flower species in crop borders to attract pest insect predators. For Scott, travelling overseas allowed him to share ideas with like-minded farmers, but was also "a great opportunity to see where we stand on a global scale."

The research contained in the report was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funding from the Federal Government, and financial support from the industry.



Further information:
For Scott Samwell's full report visit: http://www.nuffieldinternational.org/rep_pdf/1384824321ScottSamwellfinalNuffieldreport.pdf
Project Number: VG08012

Crisis plan could avert disaster

A CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN AND GROWER HANDBOOK HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED TO ENSURE THE AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY IS WELL-PLACED TO SURVIVE SERIOUS INCIDENTS.



It pays to be ready should the worst happen. With this in mind, AUSVEG, with assistance from consultancy group Control Risks, has developed a Crisis Management Plan and accompanying Grower Handbook, outlining formal procedures to follow, if disaster strikes.

The preparation of the documents follows an extensive information gathering exercise, which has involved interviews with key players, and comprehensive reviews of the risks faced by the industry.

The plan and handbook have been developed as part of Project VG12091, and have been funded by Horticulture Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

You will also find the Grower Handbook, with magnet affixed for easy display, accompanying this magazine. As well as an outline of steps to follow in the event of a crisis, the document contains a Business Continuity Plan which you can develop, in the event of a crisis on your property.

Identifying the threat

Identification is a key component of dealing with a crisis. This is where growers

play an important role. According to the grower handbook, a crisis is defined as 'an abnormal situation or perception which threatens growers' operations, people, consumers, industry assets or reputation.' A crisis can also affect just one company or grower, or be felt across the entire industry. Examples include:

- Contamination, accidental or deliberate.
- Threats, blackmail or extortion.
- Theft of dangerous chemicals.
- Environmental contamination.
- Significant workforce issues or unrest.
- Reputation damage.

The grower response

Once a looming or established crisis has been identified, the best chance of effectively managing the issue is a timely and decisive response. This includes efficient communication and consistent messaging to all involved

parties. To ensure the best chances of a positive result, it is vital that AUSVEG, as the Peak Industry Body charged with overseeing the crisis response, is notified. This can be done by contacting the Crisis Hotline on 1300 855 170. Upon calling the number, which will be answered around the clock, you will be provided with immediate initial advice.

It is important also that any inquiries, particularly those from the media, are referred to AUSVEG.

The industry response

Once AUSVEG is notified of a serious incident, the Crisis Management Team – guided by

the Crisis Management Plan – will swing in to action, to assist you and help limit the impact on industry.

The Crisis Management Plan allocates roles and levels of accountability for the management of a crisis – from the incident site to the AUSVEG Crisis Management Team. Crisis definitions, callout and communication protocols, decision making triggers, team structure and responsibilities, and stakeholder identification and management are all contained within.

The intent of the Crisis Management Plan is to assist levy-payers to get through a crisis.





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Being ready

While serious incidents within our industry are mercifully rare, that doesn't mean we shouldn't be prepared. Throughout the preparation of the Crisis Management Plan, the AUSVEG Crisis Management Team has undergone significant training, including simulated incidents to fine-tune the response process.

Overall, the development of the plan has ensured:

- That the Crisis Management Team is well-rehearsed in their roles.
- That essential skills have been developed and tested in the fields of crisis management, leadership, facilitation and communication.
- That the team is well versed in responding to complex issues in a short timeframe.
- That key stakeholders have been identified and a communications strategy implemented. This includes the development of the Grower Handbook.
- With a formal and well-rehearsed plan in place, and

co-operation from growers, our industry remains well-placed to survive a crisis.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- AUSVEG in consultation with Control Risks, has prepared a Crisis Management Plan, and accompanying Grower Handbook to enhance the industry's chances of surviving a crisis.
- Growers will receive the Grower Handbook along with this magazine, and should familiarise themselves with its contents.
- Upon identifying a potential crisis, it is vital growers contact AUSVEG's Crisis Hotline on 1300 855 170.
- Any further inquiries, especially those from the media, should be referred to AUSVEG.

i For more information:
AUSVEG
Phone: (03) 9882 0277
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Project Number: VG12091

Industry in the media



The Australian vegetable industry continues to be one of horticulture's most widely covered sectors, thanks in no small part to the AUSVEG communications department's ongoing efforts to engage with Australia's various print, broadcast and online media outlets.

The fate of vegetable processing in Australia and anti-dumping activities were hot topics throughout the month of February, following the Federal Government's decision to not provide ailing fruit and vegetable processor SPC Ardmona with financial assistance, and the Anti-Dumping Commission's latest report on imported Italian canned tomatoes.

Coles' announcement that it was going to replace its own frozen vegetable line with 100 per cent Australian-grown produce was welcomed by CEO Richard Mulcahy, who said that the move would allow for an additional 2.7 million kilograms of vegetables and potatoes to be grown in Australia. He told 3WM Radio that the growth would occur at the expense of imported produce.

Public Affairs Manager William Churchill provided comment to the Weekly Times



and ABC News Radio on the Anti-Dumping Commission's finding that 56 per cent of all Italian canned tomato imports were dumped. Mr Churchill welcomed the report, saying that there were alternative options that the Government could consider without compromising its views on taxpayer handouts, such as providing duties collected on dumped produce to food processors such as SPC Ardmona.

February saw the release of a new economic report by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) that indicated the average debt level of vegetable growers had almost tripled over the seven years to 2011-12. Spokesperson Kurt Hermann spoke to ABC Radio, saying that he hoped debt could be matched with an overall increase in profitable production and that larger growers were generating more revenue and

were better able to service their debts. Mr Hermann also spoke to several radio outlets regarding the report's finding that the average income of Australian vegetable farmers will have fallen by 38 per cent in 2012-13. Mr Hermann said that the data reflected the volatile environment for growers, due to issues such as weather.

The unseasonably warm weather also drew inquiries from television media. Spokesperson Hugh Gurney appeared on Channel Ten's Eyewitness News, discussing the potential impact of heatwave conditions on New South Wales vegetable prices. Mr Gurney explained that warmer conditions actually often led to an oversupply of vegetables, which usually resulted in lower prices for consumers. The appearance was syndicated to 10 Channel Ten stations nationwide.

Key topics for the January/February period:

- AUSVEG welcomes Coles' announcement it will source the entirety of its frozen line from Australian growers.
- AUSVEG provides comment on the fate of SPC Ardmona, saying that duties collected on dumped produce should be redirected to Australian food processors.
- Anti-Dumping Commission releases report, finding 56 per cent of all Italian canned tomatoes were dumped on Australian shores.
- ABARES data prompts wide discussions about farm finance.

These babies are tough to 'beet': Reviving Australia's processed beetroot industry

Somewhere along the line beetroot processing fell by the wayside, with production in Australia moving into a slow decline. In March 2013, the only remaining Australian-owned cannery, Windsor Farm, announced it was entering voluntary administration, ending an era of continuous beetroot processing that began in 1942. This followed the 2010 decision by Heinz to relocate the Golden Circle beetroot canning industry off-shore to New Zealand.

However, over the past 12 months, OneHarvest, the Australian company behind the creation of many pre-packed salads found in supermarkets, have been working to revive the beetroot market. To facilitate this, OneHarvest have started selling Australian-grown, pre-prepared baby beetroot under the Love Beets brand.

OneHarvest invested \$3.8

million in the Gippsland region in south-east Victoria to establish local beetroot processing in Bairnsdale, in what was a positive step forward for the local industry. The injection of funds was supported by \$150,000 from the Victorian Coalition Government's \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund.

OneHarvest's collective investment in Victoria and New South Wales has led to the creation of more than 30 new jobs in farming, processing, and product management, with the potential to grow to more than 60.

Cowra, New South Wales-based beetroot grower Ed Fagan, of Mulyan Farm, last year became Australia's first supplier of vacuum-packed beetroot.

"As a lot of food processors are getting out of Australia, OneHarvest is expanding local



operations in a way that is also enhancing the expertise of the beetroot grower base. The technology used has also enabled us to expand from being a seasonal supplier...to supplying year round," said Mr Fagan.

OneHarvest Marketing Manager, Treena Welch, said the company had been watching the beetroot industry for a number of years, and after

launching a successful product trial using imports, switched to Australian-grown beetroot to continue to meet consumer demand.

Love Beets baby beetroots are peeled, cooked and vacuum-sealed, ready for time-poor consumers to add to a salad, sandwich, pizza, dip, or juice. Check out recipe ideas and nutritional facts about beetroot at www.lovebeets.com.au.

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TUESDAY 18 MARCH ROSSMORE • 2:30PM - 6:30PM

FARM OF JOE BOUSTANI / 55 HERLEY AV, ROSSMORE NSW 2557

WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH DARWIN • 3:00PM - 7:00PM

NT DPI FACILITY - BERRIMAH FARM / MAKAGON RD, BERRIMAH NT 0828

MONDAY 24 MARCH CRANBOURNE • 2:30PM - 6:30PM

AMSTEL GOLF CLUB / 1000 CRANBOURNE-FRANKSTON ROAD, CRANBOURNE 3977

TUESDAY 25 MARCH DEVONPORT • 11:00AM - 3:00PM

GATEWAY INN HOTEL / 16 FENTON ST, DEVONPORT TAS 7310

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH ADELAIDE HILLS • 10:30AM - 2:30PM

THE HAHNDORF OLD MILL HOTEL / 98 MAIN ST, HAHNDORF SA 5245

THURSDAY 27 MARCH JOONDALUP • 2:00PM - 6:00PM

JOONDALUP RESORT / COUNTRY CLUB BLVD, CONNOLLY WA 6027

FRIDAY 28 MARCH CARNARVON • 11:30AM - 3:30PM

GASCOYNE RESEARCH STATION / SOUTH RIVER RD, CARNARVON WA 6701

MONDAY 7 APRIL GATTON • 2:00PM - 6:00PM

GATTON RESEARCH STATION / WARREGO HWY, GATTON QLD 4343

TUESDAY 8 APRIL BUNDABERG • 10:30AM - 2:30PM

BUNDABERG ENTERPRISE CENTRE / QUAY ST, BUNDABERG QLD 4670

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL BOWEN • 2:00PM - 6:00PM

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RSVP

TO RSVP, PLEASE CONTACT AUSVEG ON (03) 9882 0277, FAX
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Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States
PER14581	Pendimethalin / Parsnip / Grasses & broadleaf weeds	1-Feb-14	31-Mar-15	ACT, NSW,QLD, SA, TAS and WA only
PER14583	Chlorpyrifos / Swede turnip, Brassica leafy vegetables, silverbeet, spinach, celery, beans, snow peas & sugar snap peas / African black beetle, False wireworms, Wireworms, Vegetable weevil	1-Apr-14	31-Mar-19	All states (except Vic)
PER14318	Metalaxyl-M (Ridimol Gold 25G) / Lettuce (winter crop in clay to loam soils) / Damping-off (pythium & Phytophthora sp.)	23-Dec-13	30-Sep-18	All states (except Vic)
PER14351	Petroleum Oil / Lettuce (greenhouse & hydroponic only) / leafhoppers, green vegetable bug, grey cluster bug, Rutherglen bug & green mirid	24-Dec-13	31-Mar-17	All states (except Vic)
PER14584	Imidacloprid (Confidor 200 SC) / Brassica leafy vegetables / Aphids, whitefly and thrips (excluding western flower thrips)	1-Apr-14	31-Mar-19	All states (except Vic)
PER14326	Captan Fungicide / Protected Cropping - Capsicums, chilli peppers, cucumbers, leafy lettuce / Grey Mould	19-Dec-13	30-Nov-16	All states (except Vic)
PER14292	Chlorfenapyr (Secure 360 SC) / Field Grown Brassica leafy vegetables& Rocket / Diamondback moth, cabbage white butterfly, Heliothis & Two-spotted mite	24-Dec-13	31-Mar-16	All states (except Vic)
PER14336	Methoxyfenozide (Prodigy) / Head Lettuce (PC only) / Cluster caterpillar, looper & light brown apple moth	17-Dec-13	30-Sep-17	All states
PER14473	Dimethomorph & Mancozeb / Spring Onions, Shallots & Leeks / Downy Mildew, Purple Blotch & Botrytis Rots	18-Dec-13	30-Jun-18	All states (except Vic)
PER14352	Fludioxonil (Maxim seed treatment), Metalaxyl-M (Apron seed treatment) / Broccoli / Damping-off, Rhizoctonia	28-Jan-14	31-Mar-19	All states (except Vic)
PER14433	-Cypermethrin / Cucumber, Rocket, Silverbeet, Spinach, Brassica Leafy Vegetables, Radish / Various pests – loopers, vegetable weevil, plague thrips, red legged earth mite, cabbage white butterfly, cluster caterpillar & Heliothis	31-Jan-14	30-June-17	All states (except Vic)

All efforts have been made to provide the most current, complete and accurate information on these permits, however we recommend that you confirm the details of these permits at the following APVMA website: <http://www.apvma.gov.au/permits/search.php>

2014 Annual Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting

This is an official notice to all levy-paying vegetable growers advising that the 2014 Annual Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting will be held in June 2014 in Cairns, Queensland.

This is an important opportunity for vegetable levy payers to hear about the collection of the National Vegetable Levy, strategic priorities for the industry, and updates on current industry issues. It also allows growers to provide feedback on the levy process and R&D levy investment.

Where: Cairns Convention Centre, Cairns Queensland
When: Saturday 21 June 2014, 2:30pm-3:00pm

To RSVP, please email AUSVEG on info@ausveg.com.au.

Around the states

Queensland



Growcom congratulates Lockyer Farmers United for pressing on with plans to take its future into its own hands and build a beetroot and vegetable processing plant in the Lockyer Valley salad bowl.

The association of beetroot growers, directors and shareholders has given the green light to the job of raising \$40 million to build the factory and establish contracts with retailers to supply beetroot, and initially four other vegetables, to Australian and overseas markets.

Once the Development Application has been lodged,

and approved by Lockyer Valley Regional Council, the factory is expected to be built within two years, creating between 50 and 100 jobs from initial to full production.

The plan is to build the factory in an industrial estate near Grantham, with access to numerous markets via the Warrego Highway. Growers will also be serviced by the new public airport being built by the Wagner family nearby.

State-of-the-art equipment, new technology and work practices will provide cost efficiencies, with onsite power and waste management planned. This is in stark contrast to other Australian canneries, some more than 50 years old, which have not received necessary capital injections over the years.

The factory is expected to provide fresh, and canned, bottled and vacuum-packed products at competitive prices. The aim is to market under

its own brand, while providing canning and packing services to local growers seeking to grow their markets.

Output is expected to reach around 70,000 tonnes annually within five years.

The announcement follows two years of project-examination work, including the preparation of an international feasibility study and business case.

The Lockyer Valley has produced 90 per cent of Australian beetroot for over 60 years, under a long-term relationship with Golden Circle. However, two years ago, after Golden Circle was bought by Heinz, the company sent its beetroot operations to New Zealand.

Lockyer Farmers United was then established by beetroot growers to take control of their own destiny.

The response from national retailers and growers in other states has been favourable. The local council has been

supportive and the State Government has offered to facilitate the approval process.

While the company was given a modest \$18,000 by the former Federal Government to investigate viability, directors and shareholders recognise it will take massive private investment to get the project going. Their plan is for an operation that will be cash-flow positive in two years, and owned outright by the company in 10.

However, it is the Lockyer Valley's beetroot growers who are putting their own money on the line for this project. They are to be applauded for their endeavours to secure their futures.

Alex Livingstone
Growcom

Chief Executive Officer
68 Anderson Street,
Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006
Phone: (07) 3620 3844
Fax: (07) 3620 3880

Western Australia



vegetablesWA continues a broad range of activities to assist our growers. A number of our Western Australian growers have had approaches from petroleum companies seeking to exercise their rights under the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967, to undertake fraccing on properties. Petroleum companies can gain access to farmland if they have an exploration or production licence (issued by the Government) that gives them the right to explore and produce oil and gas reserves over an area that includes that farmland. One licence will often cover an

expansive area and potentially include a number of oil or gas installations. As a result of the licence, and the terms of the PGER Act, the petroleum company will, in almost all cases, eventually be given the right to access private farmland situated within the licenced area. This right is subject to certain restrictions imposed by the PGER Act and licence, as well as the obligation to pay appropriate compensation to the land owner and/or leaseholder. Growers approached by petroleum companies should seek to properly understand their rights and the areas in which companies are liable to pay compensation. To assist, vegetablesWA has commissioned legal advice to help growers in these circumstances and they should contact us for information.

We are in the process of organising a business planning workshop series and developing tools for growers. A special Vietnamese refresher course for

Plan Prepare Prosper workshop attendees has already been rolled out in Carnarvon, and attracted large numbers of the local Vietnamese grower community. On business matters, growers should also investigate the Concessional Farm Finance Loan Scheme as a way of reducing financing costs.

The Agriculture Produce Commission, Vegetable Producers Committee 2014 funding round has opened and will close on March 18. Growers and service providers interested in making applications are encouraged to do so.

Over the Christmas holidays, vegetablesWA provided work experience for a very capable student from the University of Western Australia, Declan McCauley. Often we hear negativity about future prospects in our sector, which discourages bright young people from pursuing a career in horticulture. Declan was very impressed and excited to

discover a range of opportunities in horticulture which he had previously never considered. We should be proud that the modern industry requires qualified people with expertise well beyond basic farm labour, in areas such as agronomy, engineering, logistics and marketing. Individual growers might also consider engaging with universities to seek students for short work experience placements to help share good news stories, and encourage the talented professionals we increasingly need.

John Shannon
vegetablesWA

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New South Wales



As a result of the wide dispersion of Queensland fruit fly and Mediterranean fruit fly in Western Australia, by value, almost half of Australia's horticultural production occurs in fruit fly endemic regions. Consequently, horticulture production in these regions is reliant on affordable and effective control options. Eggplants and capsicums are at greatest risk within the vegetable sector.

The loss of area freedom for Queensland fruit fly across the

NSW Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone (FFEZ) since 1 July 2013 has been troubling for many of our growers. This has not improved with recent restrictions on fenthion use and the lack of alternatives available to maintain in-field and post harvest control of Queensland fruit fly.

The high cost of management activities combined with ongoing costs of maintaining existing Pest Free Area arrangements, is acknowledged by industry and government as being unsustainable.

NSW Farmers understand the Department of Agriculture is examining a systems approach of Pest Free Places of Production to manage Queensland Fruit Fly, as a means of achieving market access. NSW Farmers believes Pest Free Places of Production, consistent with the International Standards for Phyto-sanitary Measures (IPSM), may be the

solution to an issue which has significantly injured the industry. The model would extend to a number of pests which impact on access to domestic and international markets.

We believe there is merit in prioritising development of Pest Free Places of Production, to ensure a viable long-term solution to market access for a number of sectors. Places of Pest Free Production are internationally accepted for a number of pest occurrences and are consistent with IPSM No. 10 – in line with world's best practice. Once recognition for market access is established, system maintenance would remain primarily the responsibility of the producer, requiring minimal government intervention and providing greater certainty for the industry. NSW Farmers believes there is an opportunity for the Federal and State Governments, to

engage and work with industry to develop the robust methods necessary to implement and accredit Places of Pest Free Production. There is also scope to advocate with our trading partners to gain acceptance for produce grown in accordance with these methods, as required phyto-sanitary standards will be met. Such co-investment will be key to realising the potential benefit that horticultural export markets can bring to rural Australian economies and the nation more broadly.

Peter Darley
NSW Farmers' Association
Horticulture Committee
Chairman
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Victoria



I was reminded by my Tasmanian colleague, Jan Davis that this is the International Year of Family Farming. What does this mean to our Victorian State and Federal Government politicians? To Victorian vegetable growers, it seems it means absolutely nothing, as they have received little support for opportunities involving intergenerational farming.

The reduction in funding to the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for research and services to the vegetable industry has been a further indicator of the State Government's lack of recognition of the importance of succession planning.

According to statistics, the Victorian vegetable industry produces over \$600 million worth of vegetables annually. The best and healthiest vegetables are grown in Victoria.

Victorian farmers endeavour to operate successful family farms, utilising new technologies, yet they need expert guidance to develop new skills and maintain viable businesses.

The decline of Australia's manufacturing industries gets plenty of front page exposure, yet there is a similar situation developing in the vegetable industry, where fresh imports are threatening to arrive and hurt local growers.

Where is the Government's offer to protect Australian growers from fresh imports that can be grown and transported into Australia more cheaply than local products?

Australian-grown vegetables are produced to meet the high standards of food safety, providing confidence that the best quality vegetables are available to consumers.

So, are we still the 'Lucky Country' or the 'Slowly Dying Country'?

In an aging vegetable industry, we look to younger generations to take the reins, and implement technology-driven methods of growing to reduce costs without affecting quality.

There are numerous training programs available, across many facets of vegetable growing enterprises. Yet there appears to be a reluctance to participate in both tertiary education programs and 'on farm' training.

It is time the industry moved on from old traditions and realised 2014 is a new era for production and marketing. We must take responsibility for the future of vegetables in Victoria by attracting, supporting and retaining young farmers.

On this theme, it is disappointing that so few younger growers are taking up the opportunity to participate in Growing Leaders – a program which helps participants gain confidence in their dealings with others, especially those they

view as superiors. It also helps develop supportive networks with like-minded people in the industry. Speaking with Victorian participants from 2013, all agree the experience was invaluable.

Most young growers are so busy setting themselves up on farms and learning about the business, that they miss these valuable opportunities.

Remember VGA Vic is YOUR growers' voice of the Victorian vegetable industry.

For industry information contact Executive Manager Helena Whitman. Mobile: 0407 772 299 or Email: helena.w@vgavic.org.au.

Keep smiling.

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Tasmania



The crisis at the SPC-Ardmona fruit processing plant in Victoria highlights the market distortions that have resulted in the closure of most of the food processing plants in Australia. The Simplot and McCain plants here in Tasmania are far from immune to this threat.

There are a number of factors that have brought on the crisis, not the least of which has been the reluctance of the two major supermarket chains,

until recently, to commit to the longer-term support of fruit and vegetables produced in Australia and, by implication, Australian farmers.

Cheap imports of questionable quality are going onto supermarket shelves in various guises. These cheap substitutes for quality Australian produce are bringing our processors to their knees, and many farmers will soon follow. Yet most consumers wouldn't have a clue, because they don't know what they are buying.

The growth in frozen and processed fruit and vegetable imports over the past decade has been rapid, especially for goods originating from China, New Zealand and Spain (in the case of tomatoes). There is a real query over the actual source of imports from New Zealand, with a strong suspicion

that much of it actually originates in China.

The demise of the fruit and vegetable processing industry and the farms that supplied them cannot be reduced to one cause, but there is no doubt the aggressive sourcing of imports by major retailers has been a significant factor, especially as it came on top of generally tough business conditions.

The fact that the major supermarkets have, at the eleventh hour, decided to enter long-term supply contracts with Australian manufacturers does not take away from the fact that processors and farmers have been doing it extremely tough, and literally sit at the bottom of the food chain that supplies produce to the consumer.

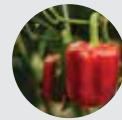
Will the change of heart come too late? Probably. The damage has been done. The

new Federal Government has shown it is reluctant to bail out companies, and if any of the other remaining processors reach the same situation, they are unlikely to get sympathy.

Therefore, the only lifeline for farmers is for consumers to put pressure on the supermarkets by demanding that they support local producers and processors, and to recognise that price can no longer be king.

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