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May/June 2016

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Young grower

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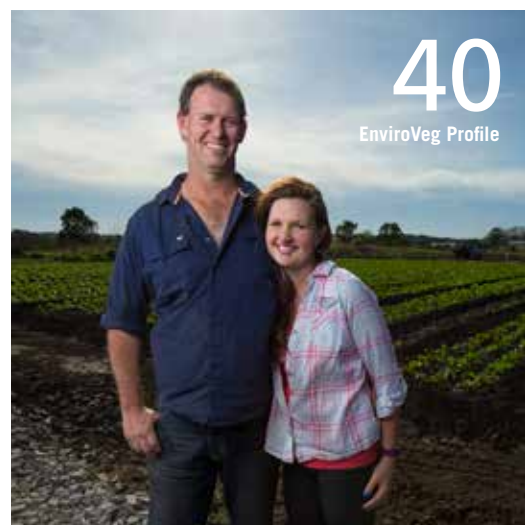
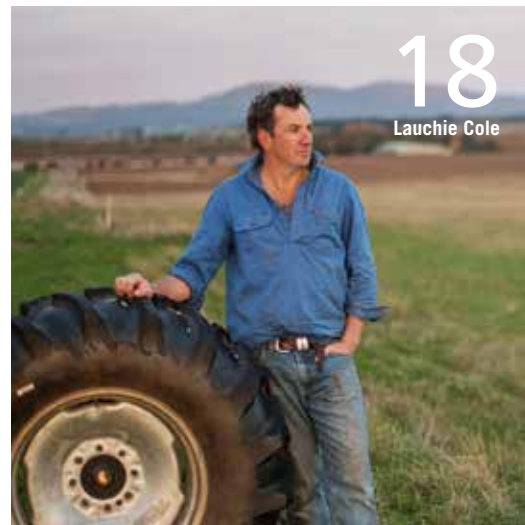
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Messages from the AUSVEG Chairman and Deputy CEO



Geoff Moar

AUSVEG Chairman

With only a few weeks left until the 2016 National Horticulture Convention, I am pleased to announce that Australian Organic, owner of the country's largest organic certification brand Australian Certified Organic, is the latest organisation to join as a co-host of the event.

There are now six industry bodies co-hosting the Convention – AUSVEG, Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL), the Central Markets Association of Australia in partnership with Fresh Markets Australia (CMAA-FMA), Growcom, Persimmons Australia Inc. and Australian Organic – a combination that promises to attract the most diverse group of delegates the event has ever seen. This is an excellent opportunity for conventional and organic growers alike to come together and discuss common issues and growing techniques.

The Convention will also welcome a delegation of 40 international fresh produce buyers from Asia and the Middle East, who will tour a selection of farms in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland in the lead-up to the event. They will then enjoy the opportunity to inspect an impressive range of local produce from Australian growers at the Produce Display event on Friday 24 June. I am confident that many Australian growers will develop valuable export contacts through this networking event with international industry representatives.

On the topic of vegetable exports, Australian growers impressed buyers at the recent Food and Hotel Asia trade show in Singapore, which ran from 12-15 April. A group of AUSVEG delegates received strong interest from major

supermarket chains and wholesalers, particularly for their leafy salad lines as well as kale, broccoli and carrots. Food and Hotel Asia is one of the most established trade exhibitions of its kind and it was an excellent opportunity for Australian growers to showcase their clean, green produce to leading buyers in this key export market.

Finally, another valuable venture exists for growers to donate excess produce to hunger relief organisation, Foodbank Australia.

All donations are tax deductible, and representatives from Foodbank can pick up produce directly from farms and markets.

Given the over-supply of produce in the Australian vegetable industry, this is a simple solution for growers to avoid wasting produce and simultaneously assist families in need.

Geoff Moar
Chairman
AUSVEG



Andrew White

AUSVEG Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Following many years of campaigning for reforms, AUSVEG recently welcomed the news that state ministers supported the Federal Government's proposed changes to Country of Origin Labelling laws.

AUSVEG has long held the position that Australia's Country of Origin Labelling laws allowed for ambiguous and deceptive labelling, which confused consumers and made it difficult for them to differentiate between Australian and foreign food products.

The reforms mean that now each label will indicate the proportion of Australian ingredients by weight, displayed in a statement and a bar graph. While AUSVEG does not believe this is a complete solution to the issue, we recognise that it is a landmark step towards a clear and robust country of origin labelling system for Australian consumers.

In less positive news, AUSVEG was disappointed at the lack of action taken by the Federal Government to change or eliminate the backpacker tax in the Federal Budget handed down earlier this month. This means that temporary workers who visit Australia on the Working Holiday Maker program will be ineligible for the tax-free threshold and instead face a tax rate of 32.5 per cent from the first dollar they earn.

Considering the number of backpackers visiting Australia has steadily declined over the past two years, with over 34,000 fewer visas granted in 2014-15 than in 2012-13, it is likely that the tax will deter more backpackers from working in regional Australia, leaving vegetable growers with

insufficient labour to harvest their crops.

The backpacker tax will severely affect regional Australia and will threaten the financial viability of the country's hardworking growers and their families. We hope the Government will acknowledge the strong opposition from Australian farming and tourism bodies and find a resolution in the coming weeks that will not threaten growers' ability to attract the workers they need.

AUSVEG is similarly concerned by the impact of foreign vegetable imports on the Australian vegetable industry. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that the gross value of the vegetable industry declined by five per cent in 2014-15, with the number of vegetable growing operations in Australia declining by 15 per cent in the same period. The past year also resulted in a decrease of nearly 12,000 hectares in the total area sown to vegetables.

Meanwhile, vegetable imports to Australia rose by over seven per cent across the same period, prompting concerns that Australian growers are suffering from a competitive disadvantage against cheaper imported produce.

AUSVEG hopes that the introduction of the new, clearer Country of Origin Labelling laws will result in consumers finally having the information they need in regards to where their food comes from, and that the new labels will result in consumers choosing to buy more Australian vegetables.

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All research and development projects have been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and/or voluntary contributions from industry, and funds from the Australian Government. *Vegetables Australia* is produced by AUSVEG Ltd and is free for all National Vegetable Levy payers. For more information or to follow AUSVEG online visit:



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ISSN 1832-3340

**FRONT COVER:**

Lauchie Cole

Photograph by Belle Young

The 2016 National Horticulture Convention is nearly upon us, and you will find plenty of information about what to expect in this issue of *Vegetables Australia*. Turn to page 12 for the latest update on speakers and events to feature at the Convention, which will be held from 23-25 June at RACV Royal Pines.

Overviews of two levy-paying grower events that will run either side of the Convention also features in this edition. Page 14 outlines the exciting speaker line-up for the Global Innovations in Horticulture Seminar on 23 June, while page 20 features the experts who will be presenting at the Practicalities for Exporting Vegetables Symposium on 26 June.

This edition also includes the latest on R&D in the vegetable industry. On page 30, we explain the effects

of the growing environment on the quality of greenhouse cucumbers. Researchers Roberto Marques and Gordon Rogers analysed the latest research in the field, uncovering many practical tips for growers.

We also take a look at the Australian vegetable industry and how it compares to seven of its key competitors from around the world. The study analysed the regulations that support food safety, marketing, transportation and exports in each country to help identify Australia's strengths and weaknesses in these areas (page 16).

AUSVEG Economist Andrew Kruup explains cost-benefit analysis on page 44, which can be a helpful tool for financial planning and making important decisions in your business.

In this edition, we also speak to several growers who share their secrets for success. Our Grower profile features Richard



Cobbledick, whose family has been farming in South Australia for six generations. He explains his passion for the industry and involvement in the Growing Leaders National Vegetable Industry Leadership Program on page 32.

On page 18, young grower Lauchie Cole from Tasmania speaks about the challenges and rewards involved in

running his own operation, which produces peas, beans, broccoli and potatoes. Lauchie is passionate about the industry and the opportunities within it.

The EnviroVeg profile features Wayne Shields, a fifth generation market gardener who has made the transition from conventional to certified organic farming. Wayne has successfully used the Vietnamese version of the EnviroVeg Manual to communicate sustainable farming practices to his workers in Victoria (page 40).

Finally, we learn from a group of Australian growers who recently returned from the 2016 USA Industry Leadership and Development Mission. The group travelled to California, Arizona, Delaware, New York and Iowa, visiting a variety of growing operations, research facilities and manufacturing factories (page 34).



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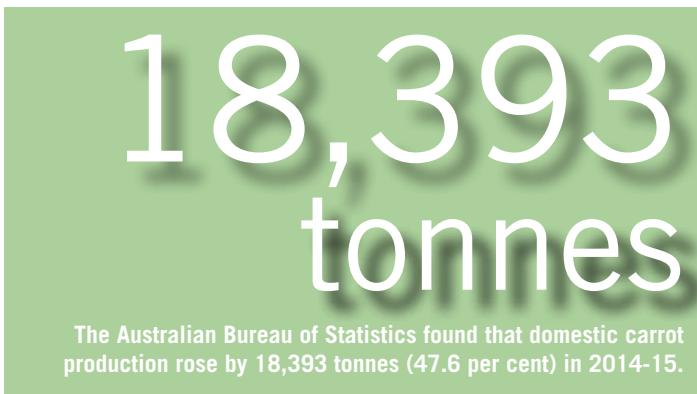
Veggie bites

Facts & figures...



45%

The average value of land owned by vegetable farmers is estimated to be worth over 45 per cent more than dairy farming land, as shown in the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences report, *Australian vegetable growing farm businesses, 2013-14 and 2014-15*.



18,393 tonnes

The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that domestic carrot production rose by 18,393 tonnes (47.6 per cent) in 2014-15.



25%

One serve of broccoli provides 25 per cent of the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) of vitamin C and vitamin K, according to Veggycation®.



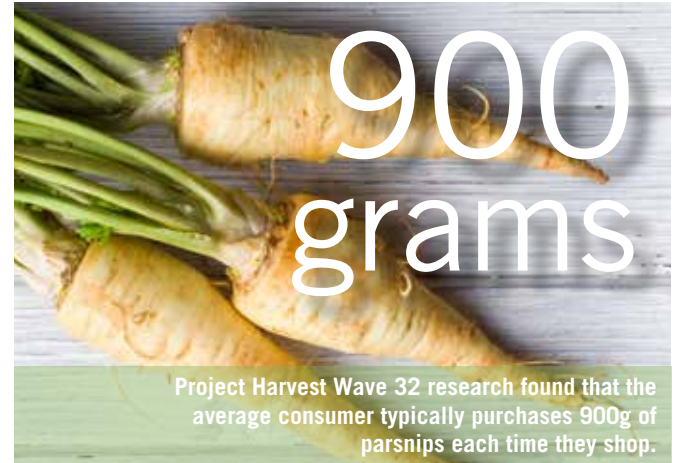
\$159.3 million

The gross value of the Australian vegetable industry fell by \$159.3 million during 2014-15, as revealed by the 2014-15 Agricultural Commodities report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



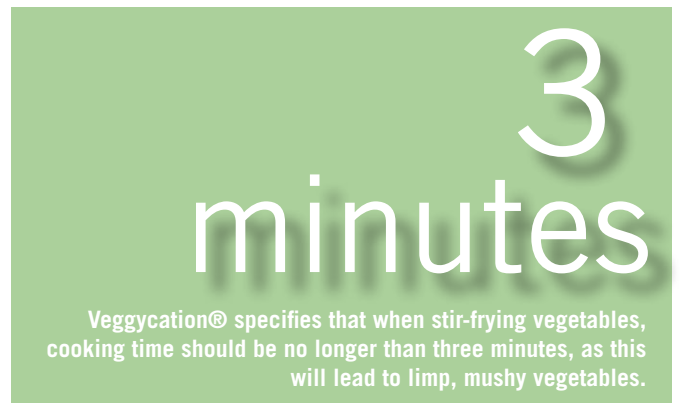
\$11.4 million

Australia's cauliflower and broccoli exports grew by over \$4.2 million (59 per cent) to a total of \$11.4 million in 2014-15, according to Global Trade Atlas.



900 grams

Project Harvest Wave 32 research found that the average consumer typically purchases 900g of parsnips each time they shop.



3 minutes

Veggycation® specifies that when stir-frying vegetables, cooking time should be no longer than three minutes, as this will lead to limp, mushy vegetables.



\$56.2 million

Global Trade Atlas findings show that vegetable imports into Australia rose by over \$56.2 million in 2014-15.



This communication was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15027

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The National Vegetable Levy at work

Who pays the National Vegetable Levy?

The levy is paid by growers who produce vegetables in Australia.

- The charge is set at half of one per cent at the first point of sale.

The Federal Government also provides funding in addition to grower levy payments. Once paid, these funds are managed by Hort Innovation.

How is levy money invested?

There are now two pools with different funding priorities.

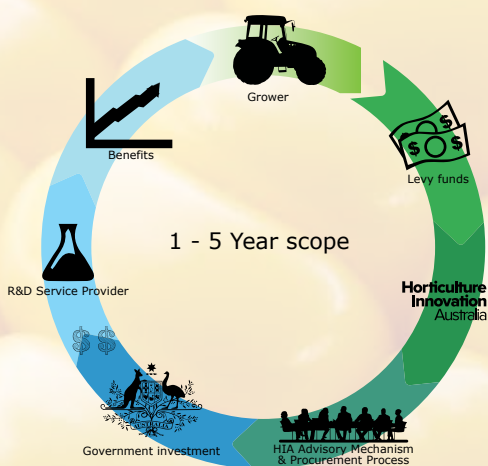
Pool 1 is funded by grower levies with contributions from the Federal Government. This pool has a **one to five year scope** and will invest in applied R&D designed to directly benefit growers. This includes pest and disease management and biosecurity matters, with findings communicated through a variety of channels including *Vegetables Australia*.

Pool 2 has a **one to 15 year scope** and matches strategic co-investment funds with at least \$20 million, at the Pool's maturity, of government seed funds annually. This pool aims to address multi- and cross-industry challenges and opportunities of strategic and long-term importance to Australia's horticulture industries.

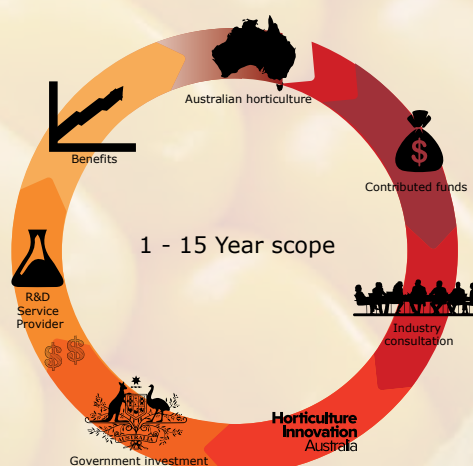
Five 'Foundation Funds' have so far been established in Pool 2 and will work with an expert panel to direct strategic projects. They are:

- The Leadership and People Development Fund
- The Fruit Fly Fund
- The Asian Markets Fund
- The Green Cities Fund
- The Health, Nutrition and Food Safety Fund

Pool 1



Pool 2



How can growers get involved?

Vegetable growers play a fundamental role in advising on the allocation of both levy and co-investment funds, and will be engaged in extensive consultation with Hort Innovation in regional grower meetings, industry-specific consultation programs and individual grower and grower group consultation.

Growers can also submit ideas for R&D projects via Hort Innovation's Concept Portal at horticulture.com.au/concept-proposal-form.

For more information about the National Vegetable Levy, visit ausveg.com.au/rnd/thelevysystem/vegetablelevy.htm



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2016 National Horticulture Convention set to impress

AS WE APPROACH THE 2016 NATIONAL HORTICULTURE CONVENTION, THE NUMBER OF EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUES TO GROW. SEVERAL WORLD-CLASS SPEAKERS WILL HEADLINE THE EVENT AND POPULAR NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES WILL RETURN TO RACV ROYAL PINES ON THE GOLD COAST FROM 23-25 JUNE.



Donna Mogg.



Jon Entine.

The 2016 National Horticulture Convention continues to gain momentum, with unprecedented levels of interest from members of the Australian horticulture industry.

Delegate numbers are set to be the highest they have ever been, thanks to the collaboration with leading industry representatives and Convention hosts AUSVEG, Apple and Pear Australia Limited, the Central Markets Association of Australia in partnership with Fresh Markets Australia, Growcom, Persimmons Australia Inc. and Australian Organic.

With a star-studded speaker line-up and a record number of supply chain companies exhibiting at the Trade Show, the 2016 National Horticulture Convention has cemented its status as the biggest event in Australian horticulture.

World-class speakers

The speaker program features an exciting array of industry experts from Australia and overseas, who will be discussing a range of important issues within the horticulture industry.

The keynote address will be presented by **Rob Kaan**, Managing Director of Dow

AgroSciences Australia and New Zealand. Mr Kaan has extensive international experience in the areas of crop protection solutions, fertiliser technologies, carbon mitigation in agriculture and urban pest management.

Jon Entine, founder of the Genetic Literacy Project, will also be one of the key speakers at the Convention. The Genetic Literacy Project is an independent organisation that educates the public on the use of genetic modification in human and agricultural science. A winner of 20 international journalism awards, including two Emmys and a National Press Club Award, Mr Entine's presentation is not to be missed.

Delegates will also hear from **Jack Vessey**, President of Vessey and Company Inc., which is the premier growing, packing and shipping operation in the Imperial Valley, California.

Local perspective

As Managing Director and CEO of Elders Limited, **Mark Allison** has been a pillar in the industry for 30 years. Drawing on extensive experience from his long career in agribusiness, Mr Allison will discuss past, present and future issues of the

horticulture industry.

Also speaking at the Convention is **Martin Kneebone**, Managing Director of specialist food market research group, Freshlogic. Mr Kneebone will discuss the opportunities and challenges of marketing fresh fruit and vegetables to compete in the \$9 billion snack food market.

Donna Mogg was Workplace Relations Manager with Growcom for almost 10 years before launching her own freelance consultancy firm. This presentation will help growers get their workplace relations in order by providing expert, practical advice that recognises the specific challenges of horticulture.

The Assistant Commissioner for the Australian Taxation Office, **Scott Parkinson**, will present on taxation requirements for growers. Mr Parkinson's presentation is sure to offer valuable insights to delegates and shed light on an important issue in Australian horticulture.

Networking events

The popular **DuPont Friday Theme Night** will once again provide the perfect setting

for delegates to unwind and network with other industry members. Following on from the popular Mexican Fiesta of 2015, this year's glamorous Masquerade Night is an event not to be missed.

The **Women in Horticulture** event is open to all full delegates, and will once again acknowledge and celebrate the integral role that women play in Australian horticulture during a High Tea at the luxurious Palazzo Versace on Saturday afternoon.

A highlight of the social program, the **NextGen Young Grower** event is open to full delegates under the age of 35. This year's event will get your adrenaline pumping with indoor skydiving on Saturday afternoon. With places strictly limited, the event is only open to those who have registered as full delegates.



Delegate registrations are now open. To register online please visit registration.hortconv.com.au. For further details about the 2016 National Horticulture Convention, or to download the registration brochure, please visit hortconv.com.au or call AUSVEG on (03) 9882 0277.



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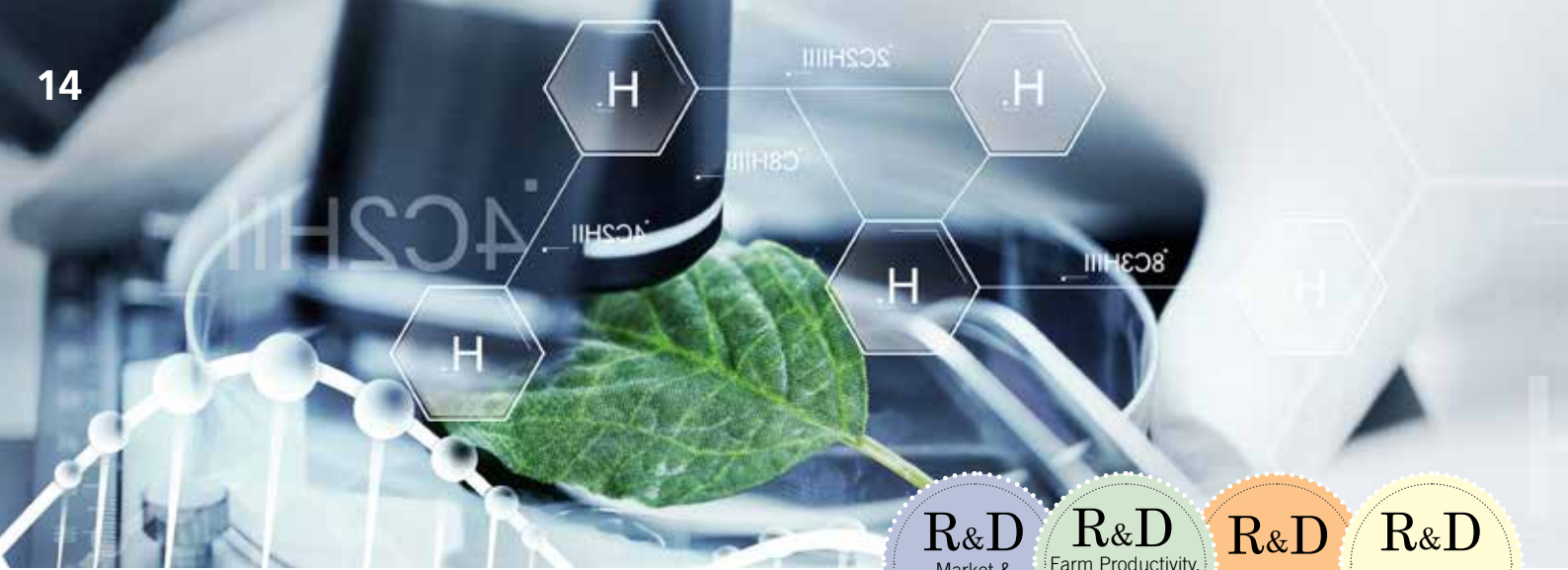
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Global Innovations in Horticulture Seminar: Making the most of the ideas boom

2016 IS OFFICIALLY THE YEAR OF INNOVATION. THE GLOBAL INNOVATIONS IN HORTICULTURE SEMINAR, WHICH WILL COINCIDE WITH THE NATIONAL HORTICULTURE CONVENTION ON THE GOLD COAST IN JUNE, IS SET TO FEATURE WORLD-LEADING SPEAKERS IN FARMING TECHNOLOGY. *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA* TAKES A LOOK AT WHAT GROWERS CAN EXPECT FROM THIS EXCITING EVENT.

Following the Federal Government's recent launch of the 'ideas boom', many entrepreneurs and small businesses are champing at the bit to dive into a new wave of creativity. From a micro-optic device that can fit into a needle to aid surgery, to the development of anti-ageing sweet corn, Australia had its fair share of innovative ideas in 2015.

This year, AUSVEG, in partnership with Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, will present the latest developments in agriculture at the 2016 Global Innovations in Horticulture Seminar, which will take place at RACV Royal Pines on the Gold Coast on Thursday 23 June. This highly anticipated event follows on from last year's Global Technologies in Horticulture Seminar, which was very well-received and generated high volumes of media coverage.

The seminar this year will focus on new international farming technologies that can help growers to reduce the cost of production, increase

efficiency and, ultimately, create a highly sustainable and competitive business.

Innovative speakers

Headlining the seminar is Genetic Literacy Project Executive Director **Jon Entine**, an American genetic modification guru, science journalist and author. Mr Entine recently gave a captivating presentation at the National Press Club that addressed the genetically modified (GM) food debate and whether we can sustain the food supply for generations to come. His views on GM have sparked much debate over the years and his presentation at the upcoming seminar is expected to ignite passionate discussions among delegates.

Dr Richard Visser, the Chair and Head of the Wageningen University Plant Breeding Department in the Netherlands, is another speaker not to be missed. Widely regarded as the foremost agricultural university in the world, Wageningen University's lecturers regularly

conduct seminars and trade events in various cities. Professor Visser recently gave a keynote speech on *Research, innovation and technology for an improved and more sustainable primary production* at the World Food Research and Innovation Forum in Milan, one of the largest horticulture forums in Europe.

Food for thought

Overall, nine speakers will be taking to the stage this year to discuss topics ranging from precision agriculture to genetic modification. They include:

- **Dr Amos Albert**, CEO of start up Bosch Deepfield Robotics in Germany.
- **Dr Fred Ziari**, CEO of IRZ Consulting, a precision irrigation firm in the United States.
- **Dr David Pattemore**, Pollination Scientist at Plant and Food Research in New Zealand.
- **Marco Azzaretti**, Product Manager for Key Technology, a processing machinery

company in the United States.

- **Dr David Ireland**, Principal at ThinkPlace in Australia.
- **Dr Gert Kootstra**, Expertise Leader in Computer Vision at Wageningen University.
- **Dr Joe Guenther**, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Idaho in the United States.

i Vegetable levy paying growers who are interested in attending this event, or would like further information, can contact AUSVEG Global Innovations Coordinator Dylan Komishon on (03) 9882 0277 or info@ausveg.com.au.

The 2016 Global Innovations in Horticulture Seminar is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

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How do we stack up? Comparing the Aussie veg industry with the rest of the world

TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED SUCCESS AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY, A RECENT STUDY COMPARED THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY WITH SEVEN OF ITS KEY COMPETITORS. THIS STUDY ANALYSED THE REGULATIONS THAT SUPPORT FOOD SAFETY, MARKETING, TRANSPORTATION AND EXPORTS IN EACH COUNTRY, RESULTING IN VALUABLE INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA'S POLICY MAKERS AND INDUSTRY BODIES.

Australian vegetable growers must deal with increasing competition in both domestic and international markets. Australian policy makers and industry bodies have the potential to assist growers in this realm by implementing and updating industry regulations.

A recent study commissioned by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited aimed to analyse the regulations of the Australian industry's strongest competitors, in order to make comparisons and look for potential improvements.

The study focused on

regulations supporting food safety, vegetable marketing, transportation and exports in seven of Australia's key competitors: the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, China, Thailand, Peru and Mexico. Extensive research was undertaken in order to enhance the competitiveness of Australian growers in an international market.

Competitor analysis

The study, executed by Control Risks Australia, involved a

comprehensive analysis of the regulations governing vegetable producers, and their level of implementation in both the competitor countries and Australia. A variety of parameters were assessed to determine the degree of regulation in each country. These parameters were designed to be qualitative, allowing an open and insightful comparison of regulations in all of the selected countries.

A competitiveness matrix was developed to provide guidance to the ratings given for each parameter. This matrix involved

assessing the levels of both the regulatory support and the enforcement effectiveness.

The findings

The study delivered several major findings. Australian regulations were found to be strong in the areas of food safety and government support for vegetable marketing when compared to China, Thailand, Peru and Mexico. This offers a competitive advantage for Australian vegetable products against



products from these countries.

China and Mexico, however, were found to have more advanced regulatory support for their vegetable exports, as opposed to vegetables grown for their domestic market. Given the lower cost of production in these countries, the study advised that it is important for Australia to seek further enhancement of its safety conditions, innovation ability and marketing support to strengthen the overall quality of its vegetable products.

Another finding was that Australia is as competitive as New Zealand, the United States and Canada in most areas of food safety and marketing support. The food safety environment in primary production and food packaging in the United States and Canada can, however, be considered more advanced than Australia's in terms of support and enforcement. Both of these countries have a set of guidelines to help growers avoid contamination of vegetables during primary production and packaging. The United States and Canada were also found to have better developed infrastructure to support food transportation.

Future planning

The project identified a number of gaps between the existing support mechanisms in Australia and those provided by the government of competitor nations. Based on these gaps, the report made several recommendations for the Australian industry, in both domestic and export markets.

The first of the recommendations for the domestic market was to evaluate the effects of 'buy local' initiatives. The United States has several government programs supporting local agricultural products, and while it is debatable as to whether these programs can positively contribute to the economy, it is worth investigating the possible outcomes. In recent years, such support in the United States has contributed to a large increase in farmers' markets.

It was also recommended that there be more investment in infrastructure, as Australia ranked 35th in the World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15*, which was lower than

the United States and Canada.

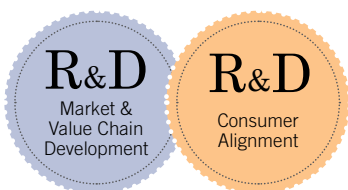
Another domestic recommendation was to further support pest control and relevant innovation.

Further recommendations

In terms of export markets, the report advised that support for food packaging safety can be further enhanced, as Australian regulation in this area is insufficiently developed compared to other competitor countries, particularly Canada and Thailand.

Another recommendation was for further monitoring of primary production. Unlike the United States, Canada and Peru, Australia does not have legally binding food safety regulations specific to primary vegetable production. Australia does, however, have guidelines regarding best agricultural practice. It is recommended that policy makers maintain awareness of market trends in order to determine how each approach impacts markets around the world.

This study provided a snapshot of the regulatory systems in competitor countries, comparing the systems as they exist currently. It was recommended that further research look at rapidly emerging markets such as China, Peru and Mexico to see how they are advancing or regressing over time.



The final report for this project, *Benchmarking and comparing the production and regulatory conditions of Australian vegetable producers with our competitors*, will be made available on the InfoVeg database at ausveg.com.au/infoveg.

This project was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG13105

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Young grower profile

Name: Lauchie Cole
Age: 38
Location: Cressy, Tasmania
Works: Woodbourn
Grows: Peas, beans, broccoli and potatoes



How did you first become involved in the vegetable industry?

My wife Sarah and I moved back to Tasmania from Victoria eight years ago to work on the family property. Charles and Janet Wallace at Woodbourn had been growing vegetables for Simplot for a number of years and we continue to do that today.

What is your role in the business?

Sarah and I own and manage a business after a successful succession plan and I manage the day-to-day running of Charles and Janet's business.

How would you describe your average day at work?

Our business is a mixed enterprise so our days are never really the same. Woodbourn runs sheep and cattle and a range of crops under irrigation. Spring and summer is our vegetable production period. In September we start preparing paddocks for peas and potatoes and usually plant in October, weather permitting. In December we usually plant beans and, depending on area distribution, we plant broccoli over this period. We grow peas and beans under our own right and contract ground for broccoli and potatoes.

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

I enjoy the challenge of growing a variety of crops during the full growing season. Most of our vegetable crops are short-term so they need a higher level of management, which is rewarding when you get the results. Growing vegetables also works very well in our rotation with other aspects of our business.

What are the biggest challenges you face working in the industry?

Managing the cost of production is a challenge, while maintaining and/or increasing production is a constant goal of ours. The other challenge for the industry is providing new varieties and technologies to help increase yield and therefore increase profitability. In doing this, we will help combat the age-long problem of attracting new and young people to the industry.

Where do you see opportunities for growth in the Australian vegetable industry?

The key to the success of the vegetable industry is the expansion of Australian products into markets both domestic and overseas. The more products we move at shelf level, the greater the opportunities to grow more area and expand the industry. This will also give our larger companies confidence that there is a strong future. As mentioned before, technology will be a big part of the next step forward. The use of

precision agriculture from planting to harvest is essential and this has to come from the whole industry, not just at the production end.

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

Make it attractive and sell the industry as a whole value chain – explain the career opportunities available. Introduce or promote programs where young people are given the opportunity to work in all aspects of our industry so they can explore the depth of it and the exciting career path it can be. Vegetable growing is not just in the paddock; it is a huge industry from production, processing, science, sales and marketing.

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

I would be working in the agriculture industry in some capacity. I believe this industry is exciting, challenging and a great way to chisel out a dynamic career.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Doing what we are doing now – working in a progressive industry with a bright future.



Photography by Belle Young.



Mighty tough on chewing pests

with a little soft spot for beneficials





Speaker line-up: 2016 Practicalities for Exporting Vegetables Symposium



WITH MANY GROWERS EXPRESSING A DESIRE TO COMMENCE EXPORTING OR TO BUILD ON THEIR CURRENT EXPORT CAPABILITIES, THE 2016 PRACTICALITIES FOR EXPORTING VEGETABLES SYMPOSIUM HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO ASSIST AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS IN SUPPLYING FRESH, CLEAN AND SAFE PRODUCE TO THE WORLD. THE PROGRAM INCLUDES WORLD-CLASS SPEAKERS WHO WILL PROVIDE PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR GROWERS.

On Sunday 26 June at RACV Royal Pines, AUSVEG, in conjunction with Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, will host the 2016 Practicalities for Exporting Vegetables Symposium. The program includes speakers from across the export supply chain, representatives from Austrade and the Federal Government, as well as vegetable growers who will share their experiences of the export process. The presentations are designed to give a practical overview of the export process, while also providing insights into the demand for Australian vegetables in export markets.

Stellar speaker line-up

Craig Ford is the Tradestart Export Adviser representing both the City of Gold Coast and Austrade, and works with more than 250 exporters on the Gold Coast, helping businesses to develop their export operations through identifying export markets, assisting in market entry and partner selection and

expanding the export market. Mr Ford will use his expertise to deliver a presentation on Austrade's Tradestart service.

Peter Barnard is a highly respected policy strategist, international public speaker and thought leader who has devoted 30 years to the agricultural industry. Mr Barnard is the Managing Director of Oliver and Doam, an independent consultancy firm that provides strategic, economic and policy advice to the agricultural sector. Mr Barnard will discuss the challenges facing new market development.

Dianne Tipping is the Chair of the Export Council of Australia and its Education Committee, and has enjoyed a long and varied career in international trade promotion and facilitation. Ms Tipping has spent over 35 years handling export transactions, and during the past 20 years has worked with the Australian Institute of Export and various other non-government and government

agencies to teach and encourage exporters to achieve their global ambitions.

Karina Keast is the Director of the Authorised Officer Programme within the Plant Exports Operations branch at the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Ms Keast has held a number of roles within the Department since 2001 and will discuss organising authorised officers for businesses and how to register your establishment for export.

Mark Mackay has extensive experience in business strategy and marketing communications, and has worked in some of the world's leading creative agencies including Saatchi and Saatchi London, Young and Rubicam, the Campaign Palace and George Patterson Y&R. Mr Mackay's presentation will explore the business considerations for the branding and packaging of fresh food in international markets.

Glenn Robertson is the Queensland General Manager of Steritech, a world leader in decontamination and sterilisation for almost 40 years. Mr Robertson will discuss the treatment options available to prepare fresh vegetables for export.



Vegetable levy paying growers who are interested in attending this event, or would like further information, can contact Sam Clayfield on (03) 9882 0277 or info@ausveg.com.au.

The 2016 Practicalities for Exporting Vegetables Symposium is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG13072



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Two-spotted mite. Photo courtesy of Clemson University – USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org.



with Scott Mathew



POTATO MOTHS AND TWO-SPOTTED MITES HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY TROUBLESOME IN RECENT MONTHS. SYNGENTA TECHNICAL SERVICES LEAD SCOTT MATHEW EXPLAINS HOW TO RECOGNISE THESE PESTS AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM.

Recently, I've been getting a few phone calls about a number of insects that are causing more issues than normal, particularly in some of the areas surrounded by broadacre farms. I believe this is due to some early summer rain causing a flush of weed growth, promoting the build-up of insect populations. These weeds have then been sprayed by farmers over the summer period, encouraging insects to migrate to the only green food source around – irrigated horticultural crops.

A couple of insects that have been particularly busy are Potato moths and mites.

Potato moths

Potato moths, also known as Tuber moths (*Phthorimaea operculella*), are one of the most damaging potato pests in Australia. High count numbers have been reported in some of the South Australian potato growing regions over the last few weeks. Potato moth larvae

mine in foliage, stems and the tubers of potatoes. They are particularly damaging during periods of warm, dry weather.

The adult moth is identified by its narrow, silver-grey body and greyish-brown wings (wingspan 12-16mm) that are patterned with small, dark specks. The moths are mainly active at dusk but can be seen flying sporadically in the potato crop during the day.

The Potato moth lays oval eggs on the underside of potato leaves and on any exposed tubers. When first laid, the eggs are pearly white; changing to yellow on maturity and to black just before hatching. After hatching, the larvae continue to grow to an adult size of 15-20mm. The complete life cycle takes between four to five weeks. If left untreated, the larvae cause extensive damage to both foliage and tubers.

In order to minimise damage from Potato moth close to harvest, you should carefully monitor pest numbers. If detected, decide on the

appropriate control measure. It is often beneficial to apply an insecticide just before the potatoes are desiccated to prevent the insect larvae from entering the soil and moving down to damage the tubers.

Two-spotted mites

The mite is another insect that prefers warm, dusty conditions over the summer period and has been causing some concerns in horticultural crops recently. Two-spotted mites (*Tetranychus urticae*) thrive in these conditions and can be easily spread by wind and on

clothing, machinery and birds, and have been more active than normal in recent weeks.

The adult Two-spotted mite has an oval-shaped body about 0.4mm long. It has eight legs and a characteristic dark spot on each side of the body. Its eggs are round and a translucent pale yellow when laid; as they develop, they become reddish. They are often deposited in clusters on the under surface of the leaf. When monitoring, pay particular attention to cropping areas that are dusty; for example, farm tracks, laneways and ends of rows.



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

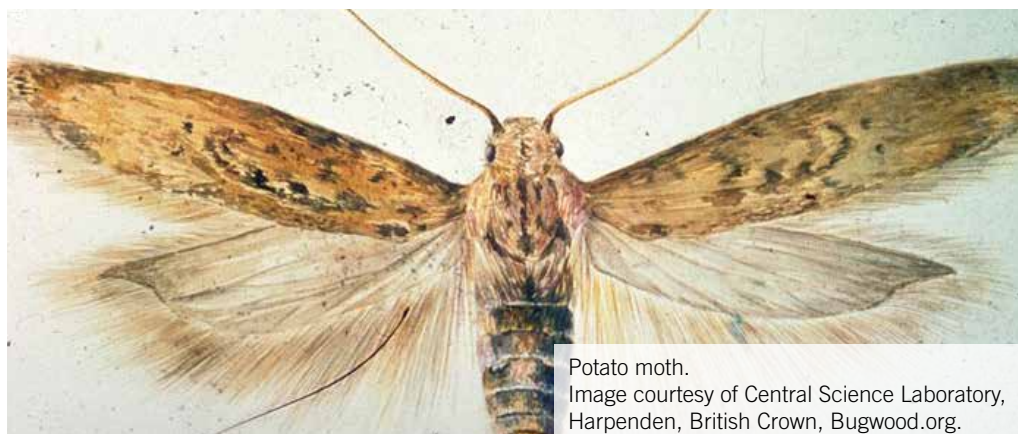
The R&D content for this article has been provided to *Vegetables Australia* to educate Australian vegetable growers about the most relevant and practical information on crop protection technologies and their on-farm applications. This communication was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project number: VG15027

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Two-spotted mite. Photo courtesy of David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org.



Potato moth. Image courtesy of Central Science Laboratory, Harpenden, British Crown, Bugwood.org.

Veggie Stats: Brussels sprouts

R&D

Drive Train

TO ENABLE DEEPER INSIGHTS INTO THE PRODUCTION AND TRADE PERFORMANCE OF KEY AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE PRODUCTS, WE HAVE DEVELOPED A SERIES OF CROP-SPECIFIC VEGGIE STATS PROFILES. THE NEXT INSTALMENT OF THIS SERIES FOCUSES ON BRUSSELS SPROUT PRODUCTION.

The following Veggie Stats article has been developed specifically to give readers a detailed snapshot of the key facts and figures on Brussels sprouts. Veggie Stats utilises data from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and the Global Trade Atlas, funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

It is important to note the data itself provides a broad indication of the performance of Brussels sprouts

growers and should be interpreted carefully. The data is presented at the national level and therefore does not account for differences among jurisdictions.

In addition to this, the information provided is not specific to every Australian grower since each enterprise operates differently from one another.

Please note that ABARES and the Australian Bureau of Statistics do not provide financial data or information on annual trends for this commodity.



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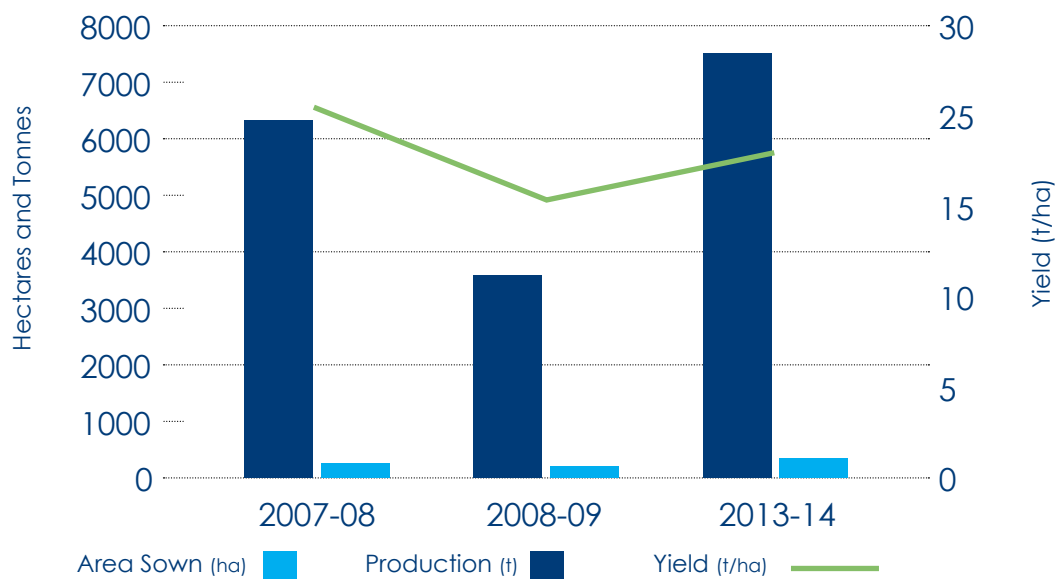


VEGGIE STATS: BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Brussels Sprout Production – Key facts and figures

- Since 2008-09, Brussels sprout production has increased by 107.6 per cent. The gross value of production has also increased by 86.1 per cent during the same period.
- The price for Brussels sprouts on the domestic market is on average 37.6 per cent lower than the South Korean export market.
- Average yield increased by 25 per cent in 2013-14.
- Brussels sprouts are experiencing an expanding export market. Since 2012-13, Brussels sprout exports have increased by over \$932,000 (315.2 per cent).
- South Korea is the largest export market for Brussels sprouts. The value of exports to South Korea is approximately three times greater than its second largest export market, Japan.

Farm-Gate Statistics



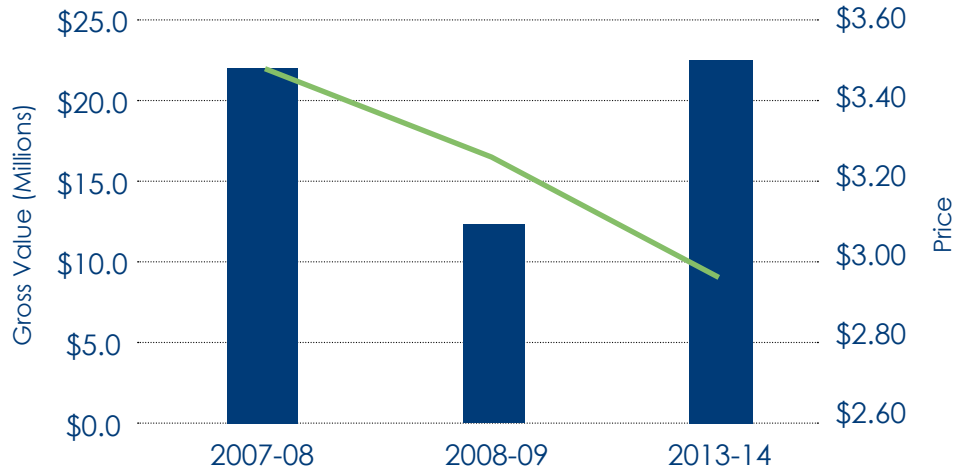
- Since 2008-09, production of Brussels sprouts has increased from 3,634 to 7,543 tonnes (107.6 per cent) in 2013-14.
- The area sown has increased from 189 to 351 hectares (85.7 per cent) over the same time period.
- Average yield has increased from 17.2 to 21.0 tonnes per hectare (25 per cent).

Gross Value of Production

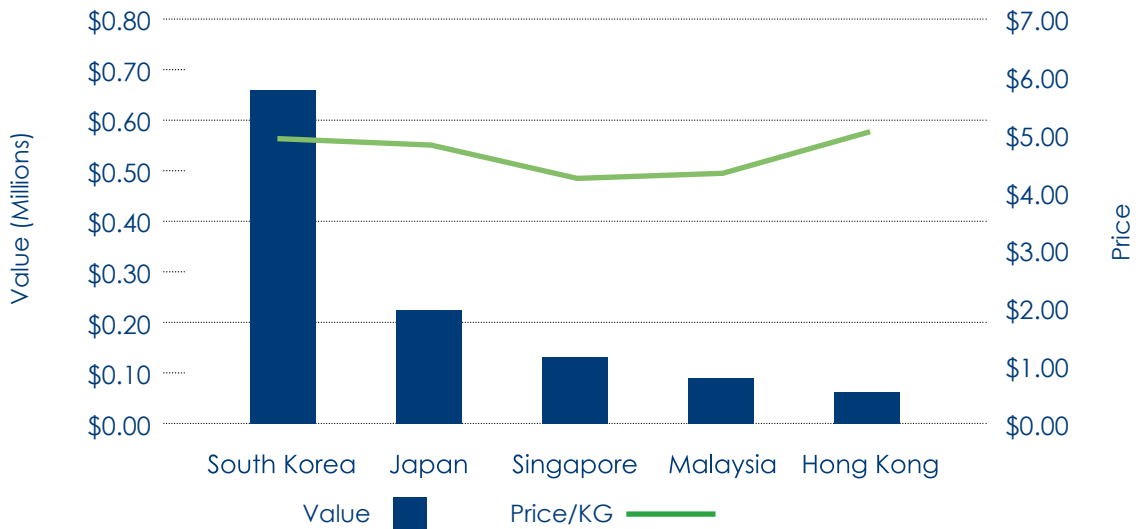
The gross value of Brussels sprout production has increased from \$11.94 million to \$22.23 million from 2008-09 to 2013-14. The growth in gross value is largely due to the 3,909 tonne increase in production over the same period.

The estimated price per kilo of Brussels sprouts has declined by \$0.53 (15 per cent) during the period 2007-08 to 2013-14.

■ Gross Value — Price/KG



Key Export Markets 2014-15



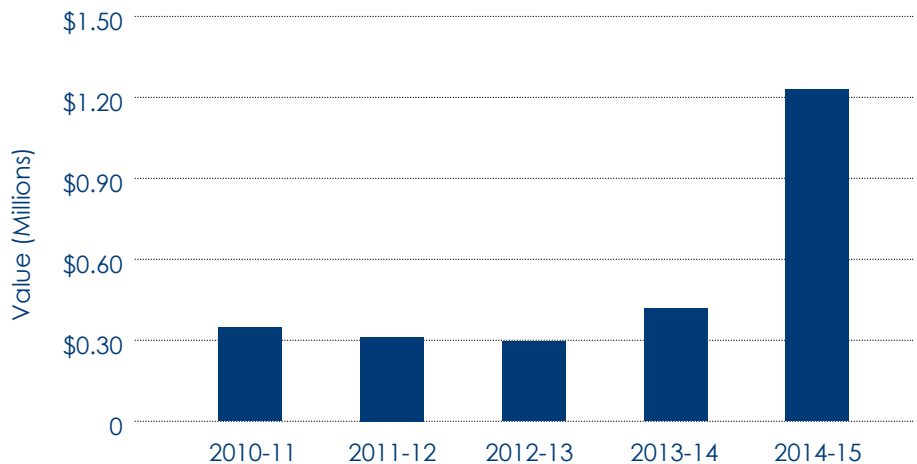
- South Korea was Australia's largest Brussels sprout export market in 2014-15, with a 53.61 per cent share of total Brussels sprout exports. Australia's second largest Brussels sprout export market was Japan, which held an 18.22 per cent share of the total export market.
- Malaysia (7.31 per cent) and Hong Kong (5.14 per cent) both have export market shares of less than eight per cent and export values lower than \$100,000.
- Export prices are the lowest for Singapore (\$4.02 per kilo) and the highest for Hong Kong (\$4.86 per kilo). South Korea has the highest export quantity of all the top five countries.

Total Exports

In 2014-15, Brussels sprout exports were valued at over \$1.23 million – an increase of over 193.6 per cent on the previous year's estimates.

The export market for Brussels sprouts has been in an upward trend over the past three years, with an overall increase in value of over \$932,000 (315.2 per cent) since 2012-13.

Brussels sprout exports have grown, on average, by 54.9 per cent each financial year since 2010-11.



InfoVeg Radio: Keeping soils healthy

INCREASING SOIL HEALTH CAN DELIVER VALUABLE BENEFITS TO VEGETABLE GROWING OPERATIONS. INFOVEG RADIO, THE VEGETABLE INDUSTRY R&D PODCAST, SPOKE WITH RESEARCHERS AND GROWERS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH LEVY-FUNDED SOIL HEALTH WORK.



Healthy soil is the lifeblood of Australian vegetable producers. With margins decreasing and growers facing constant price pressures from buyers, improving soil health on-farm can provide economic benefits to alleviate some of these burdens and increase the productivity of growing operations.

However, while there has

been a wide variety of research undertaken into soil health, translating this research into practical applications to provide tangible benefits to growers is a vital area of extension for the Australian vegetable industry.

Soil health, soil wealth

Dr Gordon Rogers of Applied Horticultural Research is

project leader on the Soil Wealth program, which is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government (Project Number: VG13076).

“There’s been a large amount of research into soil and soil-borne diseases, but the real focus for this project is to put that material into action,” Dr

Rogers said.

“There are three main ways that we’re communicating this information to growers. The first is the demonstration sites, the second is through focused training and the third is through the resources and materials that we’re producing.”

Through these initiatives, the Soil Wealth program is aiming to help growers adopt new

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practices, such as planting cover crops, which can help them reap the rewards of increased soil health.

“The use of cover crops has been really good at, in a very short time, seeing significant improvement in soil condition – that is, improved aggregate stability, better water penetration and even less soil-borne disease,” Dr Rogers explained.

The project is also focusing on reducing tillage through methods that include controlled traffic farming (CTF), which introduces ‘traffic zones’ and ‘growing zones’ to avoid farm machinery causing ongoing damage to soil that would later be used for crops.

Controlled traffic farming

Kalfresh Farms Director Rob Hinrichsen, based in Queensland, is an early adopter of CTF. He says that their growing operation has seen tangible benefits since they introduced the new system.

“We’re seeing a lot more resilient crops – crops that are a lot more able to handle wet stress, even dry stress and heat stress,” Mr Hinrichsen said.

“We don’t always see an increase in yield ... but overall we’re seeing a much more resilient cropping system, and one that is a lot cheaper to run.

“In the past, we were looking

at between eight to 11 passes with machinery and tillage equipment to go from one crop to the next. Now we’ve got it down to three at a maximum – sometimes it’s none, sometimes it’s once.”

Mr Hinrichsen says that growers who are considering their own practice changes should dive in and learn on the job.

“We’ve had to come up with a system that works on our place – it may not work everywhere, but just through learning over time we’ve made improvements,” Mr Hinrichsen explained.

“I think that for other growers who are looking on from the

side, just try a bit and learn as you go – that’s the best way to do it.”



The full interviews with researcher Dr Gordon Rogers, Queensland grower Rob Hinrichsen and AUSVEG Environment Coordinator Andrew Shaw, will be made available on InfoVeg Radio at ausveg.com.au/infovegradio.

This communication was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15027

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Exporters take a closer look at Thailand

RECENT EXPORT MISSIONS, AN AFFLUENT SOCIETY AND CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE EXPORTS INTO THAILAND. AUSTRADE'S SENIOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT COMMISSIONER FOR THAILAND GREG WALLIS PROVIDES VALUABLE INFORMATION FOR GROWERS LOOKING TO GAIN ENTRY INTO THIS PROFITABLE MARKET.

The growing demand for fruit and vegetables from Thailand's retail, food service and food manufacturing sectors is attracting Australian exporters to consider potential business opportunities. Given that Thailand is Asia's food manufacturing hub, catering to both domestic and international markets, increasing demand for quality raw materials exists, particularly for export markets, which have high food standards.

Austrade Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner for Thailand Greg Wallis explained that the increasing demand for fresh produce is also being driven by a growing middle class and changing consumption patterns.

"Thailand's affluent and increasing middle class see vegetables as a key ingredient, given their focus on a healthy lifestyle. To cater to this demand, many key retailers are increasingly importing fresh produce to ensure produce is available throughout the year," Mr Wallis said.

"This creates opportunities for Australian business, given our country's reputation for having high standards in food safety, low usage of chemicals in the production process and quality assurance systems.

"Australia is seen as a 'clean and green' destination and buyers have expectations that the produce will yield better quality, a longer shelf life and have a better taste when compared to imported produce from other countries," he added.

Fresh from Australia

Thailand's relatively close proximity to Australia allows for a short shipment time, which ensures the quality and freshness of produce is second to none. These market drivers are influencing Thai consumers, who are particularly receptive to Australian table grapes, mandarins, summer fruit, apples, pears and carrots.

"Australian carrots especially are in demand and can be

Export Calendar of Events

Produce Display

24 June 2016

National Horticulture Convention, QLD.

Reverse Trade Mission

19 – 26 June 2016

For more information on any of these events, please contact export@ausveg.com.au.

found in all major retail outlets. This interest can potentially see Australian carrots capture a greater market share from current Chinese carrots that are sold in the market," Mr Wallis explained.

Furthermore, Australia's capability to deliver fresh produce is especially welcomed for significant festivals such as the Lunar New Year or the Chinese Tomb Sweeping Day, as these products are key ingredients.

Exporting to Thailand

Export promotional activities play a vital role in showcasing Australian fruits and vegetables, to increase the presence of Australian fresh produce into Thailand.

The 'Now! In Season' campaign – a multi-market promotion held in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines from 15-23 April – was a whole-of-industry approach attended by officials from the Victorian Government and CEOs and senior executives from AUSVEG, Citrus Australia, Australian Table Grape Association,

Summerfruit Australia, Cherry Growers Australia and Apple and Pear Australia Limited.

This mission also acted as a market intelligence gathering exercise to explore opportunities for importing fresh vegetable produce into the Thai market.

A competitive advantage

The Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA), which came into effect on 1 January 2005, is one of two free trade agreements that Australian businesses can use to trade with Thailand. As a member of ASEAN, Thailand is also part of the ASEAN-

Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA).

TAFTA gives Australian produce a competitive advantage as import tariffs have either been eliminated already or were phased down to zero per cent by 2015. Meanwhile, produce from countries without a trade agreement with Thailand are subject to import tariffs of 10-40 per cent.



For more information, contact Austrade on 13 28 78, email info@austrade.gov.au or visit austrade.gov.au. To contact AUSVEG, phone (03) 9882 0277, email export@ausveg.com.au or visit ausveg.com.au/export.

The Vegetable Industry Market Access and Development Program is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG13097

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Knowledge grows

There is only one way to measure a fertiliser: results

Yara Australia Agronomist Adam Kirk investigated the benefit of using YaraLiva Nitrabor as a granular side-dress in conjunction with YaraVita Brassitrel as a foliar. The aim was to increase head weight, crop uniformity, and the percentage of first and second cut in broccoli.

Uniform head size is extremely important when determining the yield of broccoli. It will increase the yield pack-out per hectare and decrease the number of harvest passes per hectare. The Yara Demonstration site had on average 45 (100-110mm) heads in the 10m pre-harvest strips compared to 12 (100-110mm) on the control. This was a 73% increase in desirable heads cut in the first harvest.

Adam and the grower received fantastic results by applying YaraLiva Nitrabor @ 200kg/ha and YaraVita Brassitrel @ 4L/ha in addition to the farmers original program and this new broccoli trial we were able to demonstrate an increase in desirable yield by 30% and decrease in harvest costs by 30%.

This was achieved by focusing on applying the nutrients that were affecting yield at the correct crop stage. Nitrate nitrogen, calcium and boron were applied as a granular sidedress in the form of YaraVita Brassitrel (4-6 leaf stage.)

The overall yield was increased by approximately 2.1T/ha which at \$2/kg + GST for the packed broccoli, equates to an extra \$4200/ha + GST just on yield increases. The cost for the additional fertiliser was \$193/ha therefore was a net benefit for \$4007/ha by applying the additional fertiliser.

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Close up of a cucumber flower.

Effects of growing environment on greenhouse cucumber quality

MANY ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS CAN AFFECT CUCUMBER QUALITY, AND GREENHOUSE-GROWN CUCUMBERS ARE NO DIFFERENT. RESEARCHERS ROBERTO MARQUES FROM THE NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND GORDON ROGERS FROM APPLIED HORTICULTURAL RESEARCH ANALYSED THE LATEST RESEARCH INTO THE FACTORS AFFECTING CUCUMBER QUALITY, UNCOVERING MANY VALUABLE FINDINGS.

Cucumber is a widely grown vegetable in Australia, with growers producing around 14.1 million tonnes, valued at approximately \$30 million annually. Many cucumber growers choose to grow the vegetable in greenhouses as a way of controlling growing conditions. Despite this control, there are many factors within a greenhouse that can affect cucumber quality. The best way to ensure cucumbers maintain their aesthetic appeal and have maximum storage life is to manage these factors carefully.

Main quality issues

The main quality attributes are the skin colour, texture (firmness

and crispness), flavour, size, maturity and the presence of defects and diseases. In the absence of defects, colour is one of the few practical criteria for assessing cucumber quality.

Cucumbers are particularly challenging to store. They require careful handling to maintain their quality after harvest, including cooling to between 10 and 13 degrees Celsius.

As a plant from a hot climate, cucumbers are very sensitive to cold. At temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius, they rapidly develop chilling injury, leading to skin pitting, rots and breakdown in the flesh.

Warmer storage temperatures, however, can increase yellowing

and water loss, especially if the cucumber is exposed to ethylene. Accurate management of temperature and humidity is therefore essential to keep cucumbers fresh for more than a few days.

Preventing disease

Powdery mildew is the most widespread and serious foliar fungal disease of cucumbers. A number of fertiliser salts (bicarbonates, phosphates, phosphites, chlorides and silicates) applied as foliar sprays have been shown to reduce the incidence of Powdery mildew in cucurbits, especially cucumber. The salts appear to work in several ways, including altering

the pH of the leaf surface, dehydrating the fungal spores and stimulating processes of plant defence.

Silicon (plant-available silica) can increase disease resistance in cucumbers by application via the hydroponic solution or as a foliar spray. In cucumber leaves, silicon can inhibit colony growth of the Powdery mildew fungus, however it can result in slightly dull skin appearance on the cucumber.

Crop management

Fruit thinning and vine training can also affect the quality of cucumbers. Thinning of one-third of the cucumber from the main stem and laterals in



Photography by Dr Jenny Ekman.

Harvested cucumber fruit ready for packing.



Young cucumber plants growing in bags.

greenhouse-grown cucumbers can increase shelf-life but may reduce marketable yield by eight to 10 per cent.

Vine training systems can result in two to three days longer shelf-life, darker green colour at harvest, faster growth and fewer fruits per plant. Growers are advised to use the minimum number of stems per plant, orient the stems for maximum light exposure and allow more than two leaves per fruit to remain in the vine.

Maturity at harvest

There is a negative correlation between fruit age at harvest and shelf-life – the older the fruit is at harvest, the shorter the shelf-life will be.

Two large studies in California and Canada found that if harvesting is delayed by three days beyond normal maturity, the shelf-life of that fruit will be reduced by about seven days, when stored at 13 degrees Celsius.

Greenhouse nutrition

It is important that optimal nutrition is provided to greenhouse crops. Results from studies around the world suggest that levels of plant nutrients during growth can impact fruit quality after harvest.

In a Florida study, nitrate was applied to continental and Lebanese cucumbers between 75-375mg/L. An intermediate rate of 200mg/L resulted in the darkest green skin, but softer cucumbers at harvest.

A Spanish study found that applying potassium nitrate at rates of 10g/m² or 20g/m² resulted in cucumbers with higher contents of soluble solids and sugars, and the best commercial yield. Other research indicates that fruit firmness is associated with higher levels of calcium.

Leaf tissue testing and electrical conductivity control should be used to manage the nutrition of commercial cucumber crops.

Any changes to a nutrition program should be trialled on a small scale before being implemented on a commercial scale.

Seasonal effects

Although greenhouse conditions can be controlled, they are not immune to seasonal changes.

A Spanish study found that cucumber grown hydroponically in spring had lower quality at harvest than those grown during winter. This included poorer skin colour and higher levels of flesh whitening and acid.

Another study, based in Australia, compared various environmental controls in a greenhouse. The results clearly showed that the better the control, the better the quality, shelf-life and yield of a Lebanese cucumber crop.

Controlling the temperature and humidity inside the greenhouse had significant benefits in terms of increased storage life and reduced chilling

injury. Cucumbers grown in fully controlled conditions maintained colour and firmness following storage, and were the least likely to develop rots.



For more information please contact gordon@ahr.com.au, roberto.marques@dpi.nsw.gov.au, or visit ausveg.com.au/infoveg.

This project, *Pre-harvest practices that will increase the shelf-life and freshness of vegetables*, was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG14025

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Continuing the Cobbledick family legacy



Left to right: Courtney, Richard and Ken Cobbledick.



THE COBBLEDICK FAMILY HAS BEEN FARMING THE SAME PARCEL OF LAND IN URAIDLA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA FOR NO LESS THAN 166 YEARS. NOW, SIXTH GENERATION GROWER RICHARD COBBLEDICK IS CARRYING ON THE LEGACY OF HIS ANCESTORS WHILE KEEPING A MODERN MINDSET TO INNOVATE THE FARM INTO THE FUTURE. DIMI KYRIAKOU REPORTS.

Nestled within the rolling Adelaide Hills is a vegetable growing operation that boasts a family history as rich as the soils that nurture its crops.

Since 1850, this pocket of land in Uraidla, South Australia, has been farmed by the Cobbledick family – a name that is synonymous with vegetable growing in the state. The management of the farm is now in the capable hands of sixth generation family member, Richard Cobbledick.

After growing up on the farm and attending an agriculture high school in Adelaide (even growing celeriac as a side business for pocket money), there was no question about the course of Richard's future. He started working full-time on the farm in 2000 and has since been involved in all aspects of farming, marketing and running of the family business, which grows a range of cabbage and lettuce varieties, cauliflower, kohlarabi, celeriac, leeks and beetroot for domestic and export markets.

"This is not a job; it's a lifestyle. There are so many different aspects of this industry that you're never doing the same thing," Richard says.

A new chapter

Last year, Richard and his wife Tara started a new business, Cobbledick Produce, which represents the sixth generation of family growers. As Managing Director, Richard is responsible for overseeing the farm in Uraidla, another at Woods Point near Murray Bridge and a market floor operation at the Adelaide Produce Market. Richard works closely with his sister, Courtney, and his father, Ken, who provides assistance from afar.

"Since we started Cobbledick Produce, I have probably gone more into the business side of things, which is only natural. I still like to get into the field, but it's not as much as I used to," Richard says.

Given this significant change in responsibility, Richard successfully applied for the 2016 Growing Leaders National Vegetable Industry Leadership Program, which is facilitated by Rural Training Initiatives and focuses on developing personal, business and industry skills in emerging leaders.

"I applied for the Growing Leaders program because I wanted to improve my

leadership skills and public speaking. I still consider myself to be a grower, but I am also a business man," he explains.

"People often say that being a grower means you have to be out in the field all the time. While I do agree with that, business has changed and if your skillset is not right and you haven't got the right leadership behind you, your business doesn't function."

Following the first workshop, which involved presentations from industry experts, a visit to the Melbourne Market and some public speaking, Richard says the program has already given him a fresh view of how he manages Cobble Dick Produce.

"When you set foot off the property and look into it, things stand out that you really have to address. Growing Leaders gives you the skillset to manage that and implement change."

A balance between old and new

Richard is aware of the need to constantly adapt to change and he hopes that the skills he develops through the Growing Leaders program will help him set up the farm for the future.

"A lot of knowledge has been passed down over the generations. While it's important to not discount the value of this knowledge, it's also about being able to keep up with modern ways of farming," he says.

"You've always got to change and aim for different goals, but keep all the knowledge and experience in the back of your mind."

Today, Richard is thankful that his ancestors had the foresight to recognise the numerous benefits of Uraidla as the ideal location to grow vegetables.

"The farm has always been based here and it was always a vegetable farm. The loamy soils, high rainfall, proximity to Adelaide and climate are all major benefits of farming here," Richard says.

"This valley used to have numerous vegetable growers and we're the last ones left – the bigger ones got bigger and the smaller ones got smaller. I honestly believe the ability of the others to adapt to change in the industry was too great."

Richard notes that rising input costs and the continual upgrade of infrastructure to meet market demand are some of the

ever-present challenges facing the business and the industry as a whole. Despite this, he maintains a positive outlook for the Australian vegetable industry.

"I see the industry as a very secure one because at the end of the day, we all have to eat. It's going to meet more challenges but it will require industry to band together and address it as a whole rather than individually," he explains.

"Once I get my management set right, I would like to be involved at an industry level to work towards higher farm gate returns for the viability of the industry."

Continuing the legacy

Richard says that continuing the family legacy is his proudest achievement to date. And with two young children of his own, the future of Cobble Dick Produce is certainly promising.

"I will definitely be trying to encourage the kids to get involved in the farm. Even though there is no definite indication that they will, they are showing signs of interest. My 16 month old son has a habit of pulling out beetroot that isn't ready," Richard laughs.

"We've got big goals to rebuild the business as a whole and rebuild the infrastructure that has affected efficiencies in the business. I'm aiming to return profitability to the business and open up more markets with the increased ability to handle bigger volumes.

"My aim is not to be the biggest vegetable growing business, but the best."



Photography by Andrew Beveridge.

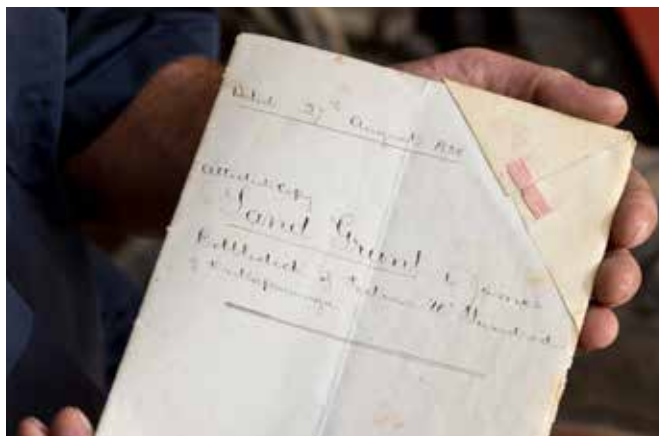


Richard and Tara Cobble Dick with their two children.



Growing Leaders is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15030





Participants discuss industry issues with Bob Martin at Rio Farms in the Salinas Valley, California.

In veg we trust: taking inspiration from America

EARLIER THIS YEAR, A GROUP OF NINE AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS PARTICIPATED IN THE 2016 U.S.A. INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT MISSION. THE GROUP VISITED A VARIETY OF LARGE GROWING OPERATIONS, RESEARCH FACILITIES AND MANUFACTURING FACILITIES, AS WELL AS THE LARGEST AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION IN THE WORLD. THE PARTICIPANTS GAINED VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHTS ON THIS MISSION, AND EXPANDED THEIR NETWORKS TO INCLUDE INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTACTS.

The 2016 U.S.A. Industry and Development Mission gave nine Australian vegetable growers the opportunity to visit an array of vegetable growing operations, processors, packers and research facilities in the United States. The aim of the two-week mission, which took place from 7-20 February 2016, was to expose these growers to the scale, technologies and practices of the vegetable industry in the United States.

American innovation

From the moment the plane landed in California, the participants were eager to experience as much of the industry as they could. The first stop was Bakersfield, home to the enormous Bolthouse Farms. This growing operation has farms all over the country, with around 80 hectares harvested every day, to ensure a year-round supply of carrots. The group was impressed by the scale and automation of the processing plant, where large carrots are cut into two inch pieces, peeled and polished in order to be presented as baby carrots.

The next day was the group's visit to the World Ag

Expo in Tulare, California. With over 1,400 companies exhibiting the latest in farm equipment and technology, the participants were in agricultural heaven. Throughout the day, participants had the opportunity to chat to local growers and sales representatives, attend speaker sessions and compare the variety of technology on offer with what is available in Australia.

Seeds of knowledge

After a busy day spent at the Expo, the participants were happy to enter the serenity of the Salinas Valley, one of the largest growing regions in the United States. Here they visited Rio Farms and its subsidiary company, King City Nurseries. The nursery is one of the largest on the west coast of the United States, supplying its clients with 470 million seedlings in 2015. Participants saw how nursery workers use an automatic vacuum seeder to sow seedlings into trays, which are consolidated 32 to a pallet. Each pallet can be maneuvered by forklift between sowing room, germination room and polyhouse, resulting in reduced handling and costs and

improved worker safety.

A tour of Rio Farms allowed the group to discuss a variety of issues with Farm Manager Bob Martin. The participants learnt that food safety is a major issue in the area, following a salmonella outbreak in 2006. Items of focus include field fencing, vermin control, aprons, hair nets and a ban on field food consumption.

The group then flew on to Yuma, Arizona. This dry, desert region on the border of Mexico is an important growing area for the United States, with 90 per cent of vegetables consumed in the winter grown here. The group visited two large farms in the Yuma region – Top Flavor

Farms in Yuma itself, and Vessey Farms across the border in the Imperial Valley, California.

Both farms source much of their labour from Mexico, and participants were interested to see how the ready availability of cheap labour can influence on-farm practices, as more reliance on labour can result in less automation on-farm.

Impressive research

After a week of sunshine on the west coast, the group flew across the country to the freezing winter of the east coast. The group travelled to the DuPont research facility in Newark, Delaware, where they



A visit to the John Deere Tractor Factory in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Participants discover new machinery at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, California.



Steve Alameda from Top Flavor Farms in Yuma, Arizona discusses crop care with participants.

learnt how a new chemical is developed, from discovery to marketing. The participants were interested to learn that it usually takes at least eight years before a newly discovered active chemical is released onto the market.

Next, the group visited Aerofarms, a start-up company dedicated to addressing the global food crisis by creating local, sustainable indoor farms. The participants were treated to a lettuce tasting and learnt how Aerofarms is using specialised aeroponic technologies and algorithms that allow the

growing cycle to be perfected over time.

The final visit of the mission was to the John Deere tractor factory in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This visit was a highlight for many of the participants, with the group getting the chance to see each stage of the large-scale manufacturing operation.

A valuable mission

After two weeks of witnessing the huge scale and ingenuity of the American industry, the participants left the country

with fresh knowledge, valuable insights and a strong network of local and international contacts. Upon returning home, the participants have endeavoured to pass on the information they gathered to ensure their experiences benefit the industry as a whole.



A full project report will be released in coming weeks and will be made available on the InfoVeg website: ausveg.com.au/infoveg.

This project was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy, voluntary contributions from vegetable growing operations and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15702

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Preventing and managing rust diseases in vegetables

RUST AFFECTS MANY VEGETABLE COMMODITIES, DAMAGING THE QUALITY AND YIELD OF CROPS ALL OVER THE WORLD. FOLLOWING A RECENT PRESENTATION AT THE 2016 AMERICAN PHYTOPATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY RUST SYMPOSIUM IN FLORIDA, INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHER STEVEN KOIKE SPOKE TO *THE FRONT LINE* ABOUT THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF RUST AND HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE DISEASE.

Rust diseases are caused by pathogenic fungi and can affect numerous vegetable crops, including carrots, spinach, sweetpotato, peas and beans, to name a few. The effects can be devastating for growers, as rust diminishes the quality and aesthetic of the produce.

Steven Koike, a Plant Pathology Farm Advisor at the University of California, has studied rust for over 20 years. He is involved in educational programs and applied research studies focusing on rust and other diseases.

Mr Koike recently presented at the 2016 American Phytopathological Society Rust Symposium in Florida, where he advised delegates on the most effective ways to recognise and manage this issue.

“Significant rust outbreaks have occurred in various parts of the world on allium crops,” Mr Koike explained.

“In the United States, some leafy vegetables, such as endives, spinach, beetroots and chards experience periodic rust issues.”

Having witnessed the losses caused by large-scale rust outbreaks in California, Mr Koike has seen the serious quality

issues that growers face when rust is present in vegetable crops.

“The main challenge for rust diseases on vegetable crops is the direct impact on quality loss. If rusts show up on most vegetable crops – especially leafy commodities – the crop is not really marketable given the very high quality standards and intense international competition.

“In contrast, while severe rust on a wheat crop may affect yields, the final commodity is still useable and can still be harvested and sold.”

Rust outbreak in California

In 1997, and again between 2007 and 2015, California experienced an outbreak of rust on garlic. These outbreaks highlighted the varying reasons that may be behind an outbreak.

“In 1997, a determining factor was the ‘El Nino’ weather pattern and record-setting rainfalls for that year. The prolonged moisture certainly allowed rust to reach state-wide, epidemic levels,” Mr Koike said.

The second outbreak of

the disease, in 2007-2015, affected leeks as well as garlic. The results of the rust on leek, however, were varied.

“In 2015, the reasons were unknown. However, with leeks now developing rust, we are sure this newest rust issue is the result of a recent introduction of the pathogen,” Mr Koike explained.

“Most infected leek crops experienced slight yield reduction, because symptomatic leaves had to be removed, thereby reducing the size and weight of the harvested unit. In only a few cases did early, severe rust seem to result in stunted, smaller plants.”

Significant consequences

Mr Koike noted that another serious side-effect of rust outbreak is the impact this has on trade markets.

“The 1997 rust disaster resulted in a state-wide reduction of harvestable garlic. Because of this, arrangements were made to import garlic from China to meet market needs.

“However, with such a trade agreement in place, it is difficult to prevent imported garlic from entering the U.S. even once the California industry recovered.”

During these outbreaks, a Garlic Rust Taskforce was established by California’s



Close up of rust on leek.
Photo courtesy of S.T. Koike.

agricultural industries. Mr Koike noted that fast-moving groups such as the Taskforce are important in safeguarding vegetable commodities in the event of an outbreak.

“Such groups consist of industry leaders who assess the needs and challenges facing the commodity, seek out and fund researchers to find answers to pressing questions and distribute and publicise the findings to help all the growers.”

Be prepared

Mr Koike believes that preparation and knowledge are

key to ensuring vegetable crops are protected from rust.

“Growers should be informed about possible rust diseases for their particular vegetable crop,” he said.

“More diverse crop rotations will not prevent rust but may help to reduce the impact.

“Timely, preventative application of fungicides is critical for conventional growers.”

While conventional growers can use fungicides to fight the disease, Mr Koike warned that organic growers are likely to struggle with managing rust.

“Controlling rust in organic

systems is almost impossible, unless resistant cultivars are available. Rust-resistant cultivars for vegetable crops are rare and generally not available,” he said.

Mr Koike reiterated that fungicides, applied early and frequently, are the most effective method of controlling rust diseases in conventional systems.



i For more information, please contact Steven Koike at stkoike@ucanr.edu or AUSVEG Assistant National Manager – Scientific Affairs Nicholas Schmidt on (03) 9882 0277 or nicholas.schmidt@ausveg.com.au.

This communication was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15027



Close up of rust on leek. Photo courtesy of S.T. Koike.

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EnviroVeg wrap up: Workshop and program survey

The EnviroVeg program recently hosted a successful R&D seminar in Virginia, South Australia on 30 March.

The seminar included presentations by leading industry members including Irrigation Soil and Management Trainer Noel Johnston and Solargain Commercial Renewable Energy Consultant Keith Lynch. Attendees also had the chance to hear from Biosecurity SA Plant and Food Standards Manager Geoff Raven and AUSVEG Environment Coordinator Andrew Shaw.

EnviroVeg regularly hosts and attends workshops for vegetable growers across the country.

Share your feedback

EnviroVeg has released a survey for all levy-paying vegetable growers to have their say on the future of the industry's best practice environmental

management program.

The EnviroVeg program offers the opportunity for growers to be recognised for these best management practices and, as a result, your feedback is invaluable to the future of the program. The results of the survey will be used to further develop the EnviroVeg program for growers and members and to determine the benefits of the program.

i For more information on EnviroVeg seminars or to access the online or hard copy EnviroVeg survey, please contact AUSVEG Environment Coordinator Andrew Shaw on (08) 8221 5220 or andrew.shaw@ausveg.com.au.

Get the facts: Access relevant business information

The Australian Government's business website, business.gov.au, contains a treasure trove of resources for an agricultural business.

In the Agriculture Industry Fact Sheet, there are 16 sections that relate to conducting and developing an agricultural business. This includes links to the Australian Bureau of Statistics website, which provides commodity figures, water usage rates and other statistical information. Key information on legislation, initiatives, levies, charges and grants can all be accessed on the website.

growers. Businesses can benefit from sound environmental management practices through efficiency and productivity gains; assistance and grants from the government; reduced expenditure on raw materials, energy and water; recognition through environmental awards; accessing new market opportunities for goods; and creating a positive impression in the mind of the customer. There is also an information kit from the Department of the Environment on profiting from environmental improvement in business.

Environmental management

The business benefits of environmental management are also outlined, along with key resources available to

i For more information visit business.gov.au or contact AUSVEG Environment Coordinator Andrew Shaw on (08) 8221 5220 or andrew.shaw@ausveg.com.au.



Protecting bees and wildlife



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While overall farmed honey bee populations have been rising across the world, global honey bee populations remain under severe pressure due to factors including habitat loss, bee pests and pathogens such as the virulent viruses transferred by the Varroa mite. Australia remains free of the Varroa mite and some of these viruses, however we can ensure the continued protection of our bees by learning from overseas issues.

Growers and beekeepers: keeping up-to-date

“In Australia we have some of the healthiest honey bee colonies in the world, and it is important for us to do everything we can to keep it that way,” said CropLife Australia CEO Matthew Cossey.

With this goal in mind, CropLife Australia and the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council have developed an app that facilitates communication between farmers and beekeepers. The ‘BeeConnected’ app works by

notifying registered farmers when beekeepers set up hives near their fields. Meanwhile, beekeepers can find out when crop protection products are being used.

Industry R&D

As part of investing in R&D for bees, Bayer produces a bee health magazine, *BeeNow*, which links agriculture and pollinators worldwide. The latest edition focused on a field station in England where integrated farm management techniques are being used to help honey bees, bumblebees and other wild bees flourish alongside good crop yields.

The edges of tracks and fields at the station are lined with flowers and beetle banks. This helps to ensure that the farmland works as a suitable environmental habitat – not only for crops but for bees and other insects.

This sort of investment in research allows benefits to flow on and protect crops in Australia from facing the same challenges as overseas

agricultural practices.

Helping honey bees

Dr Ivor Davis, a Master Beekeeper and trustee of the British Beekeepers Association, makes recommendations for ways that everyone can help to preserve honey bees.

1. Plant bee-friendly plants

Single flowering plants and vegetables encourage honey bees to visit your crop. Bees like the allium family, all mints, beans, flowering herbs and daisy-shaped flowers.

2. Use local honey and wash honey jars

Honey from foreign countries can contain bacteria and spores that are very harmful to honey bees. Leaving such a jar outside encourages honey bees to feed on the remaining honey and this can result in the whole colony becoming infected.

3. Find space for a beehive

Many would-be beekeepers find it difficult to find a safe space for a colony of bees. Growers who have an appropriate space

on their land are advised to contact the local beekeeping association. A beehive can make a significant difference to crop productivity health.

4. Be bee friendly

Bees are good neighbours when not provoked. If a bee is near you, do not agitate it with sharp movements. By staying calm and moving away slowly, the bee will soon lose interest.

It is useful to note that bees do not like the smell of leather clothing or alcohol and regard dark clothing as a threat. They can also be confused by scented soaps, shampoos and perfumes.



For more information please visit bee.care.bayer.com.

The EnviroVeg Program is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG12008



Peninsula Fresh Organics owners Wayne and Natasha Shields.

Growing a sustainable model

BEGINNING WITH THREE ACRES IN 2009, PENINSULA FRESH ORGANICS HAS GROWN OVER THE YEARS TO COMPRISE 40 ACRES IN BAXTER, VICTORIA ON THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA AND 100 ACRES IN BARHAM, NEW SOUTH WALES NEAR THE MURRAY RIVER. WAYNE SHIELDS IS A FIFTH GENERATION MARKET GARDENER, CERTIFIED ORGANIC VEGETABLE GROWER AND INNOVATOR. HE SHARES WITH *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA* THE SECRETS TO HIS SUCCESS.

Fifteen years ago, Wayne Shields was a conventional farmer. In recent years, however, he has found his niche as an organic grower offering year-round supplies of lettuce, leek, kale, cabbage and heirloom varieties. After expanding his business, Peninsula Fresh Organics, to a second farm in Barham, New South Wales on the Murray River, he has been able to extend these lines.

“I’ve found a lot of opportunities in the organic sector and there has been room for us to grow. With the expansion up into Barham, we are moving into the

bigger volumes of produce like the butternut pumpkin,” Wayne says.

The foundation for the company’s growth has been an ecosystem approach to farming. This approach is seen not just in the sustainable practices that are implemented, but also in the company’s employment, development programs and community involvement.

“I have seen that when you are not damaging the environment, the environment helps you get through things. When other farmers near me are having an issue with a certain pest, I have my own

ecosystem helping me out.”

Wayne perfects one business aspect before moving on to the next. His plans include installing solar power and drip irrigation practices for increased sustainability. Currently, his focus is on developing sustainable biofertilisers through the ReGenAg Program.

“There’s a whole biofertiliser movement. There are courses – of which I am hosting a few – and you take the processes that apply to your business. I am getting the biology in the soil kick-started by learning about brewing my own biofertilisers and composts. I got a really

good result out of that – and it is only early days yet.”

Community stewardship benefiting all soil

After completing the soil development course, Wayne noticed improvements to both his produce and his bottom line, and is now helping others to benefit from it.

“I thought it was fantastic and I got good, quick results – especially in the sandy soil of Barham – and cheap results too. Once you know the recipe, you do it yourself and it cost so





Photography by Luka Kauzlaric.

much less. For those looking to limit their inputs, there is some really good information out there.”

Peninsula Fresh Organics has hosted growers from across the country. The most recent course attracted growers from Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria, contributing to the development of a network for open communication among growers.

Peninsula Fresh Organics Land Management and Quality team member Lisa Brassington believes the ReGenAg Program has made a huge difference to Wayne’s produce production as well as many others.

“ReGenAg is the theory of regenerating the soil on top. It’s a smart way of doing an in-house green waste system. It teaches the biochemistry side to soil and has been a great way for growers to get a profile for different areas of soil performance in a single paddock and to understand what results you can achieve with crop rotations,” Lisa says.

“The upside for the

community is that farmers have a network, a ‘biofertiliser phone-a-friend’ from all over Australia that they can use.”

Lisa explains that the proof for the program is in their produce and the interest it has generated at the farm gate. The local Landcare network even organised an organic grower’s group from across Western Port Victoria to visit the farm and see the effects of the program.

“This year’s produce is saying, ‘Thanks for feeding me – I’ve come on big and strong.’ The growers will be able to see the effects of applying the methods of EnviroVeg and ReGenAg for themselves.”

Communicating strength

Effective communication is essential across the whole business operation at Peninsula Fresh Organics, but is of particular importance for the multicultural staff. With a component of Vietnamese speaking workers on-farm, Wayne had been searching for ways to communicate

complex operating instructions to these team members, who include farm managers. The recently released Vietnamese EnviroVeg Manual has been very useful in helping the workers to understand more complex instructions and farm management techniques.

Lisa appreciates the Vietnamese farmers’ connection with farming the land and the importance of conceptualising EnviroVeg Best Environmental Management Practice theories with on-farm operations.

“In Vietnam they are very good at intensive horticultural farming; the farmers have natural land management skills but not always the technical horticultural understanding. The Vietnamese EnviroVeg Manual gives these growers the opportunity to understand the theory of horticulture, not just the practice,” she says.

“It might answer farming questions that they don’t know how to ask.”

She believes the next level would be for the industry to have access to a common

smartphone translation tool for all areas of agribusiness.

“It would be great to have a multi-lingual/multi-crop app developed for farmers. Everyone has a smartphone in their pocket and it would also be especially great for communicating with international buyers.”

Looking ahead

Wayne recognises that supporting sustainable growers is important for the future of the industry.

“I think down the track there will be a bit of a meeting between organic and conventional. EnviroVeg is a good starting point – it takes people to a place they probably didn’t think they could get to, with just a few simple changes to their practices.”



The EnviroVeg Program is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG12008



Peninsula Fresh Organics Land Management and Quality team member Lisa Brassington with Vietnamese growers.

AUSVEG reached a national audience of 2,454,735 throughout the month of March, with a total of 706 media reports mentioning AUSVEG across print and broadcast outlets.

Country of Origin Labelling

AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy appeared extensively in print and broadcast media welcoming the announcement that state and territory ministers supported the Federal Government's proposed changes to Country of Origin Labelling laws.

Mr Mulcahy said the long-awaited decision means Australian consumers will have a better idea of where the food they are eating comes from, and added that the announcement represented an important

win for clearer food labelling systems in Australia.

Impact of veg imports

Following the release of new information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, AUSVEG Economist Andrew Kruup featured in multiple print and broadcast media outlets discussing the impact of foreign vegetable imports on Australia's vegetable industry.

Mr Kruup said the gross value of the vegetable industry in Australia declined by five per cent in 2014-15, while vegetable imports to Australia rose by seven per cent in the same period, prompting concerns that local growers are suffering from a competitive disadvantage against cheaper imported produce.

Protecting industry

AUSVEG Manager – Communications Shaun Lindhe appeared extensively on broadcast media to discuss the proposed increase to the Australian vegetable industry's Emergency Plant Pest Response Levy, which is intended to act as an insurance policy for the industry against losses in yield, production and potential domestic and international trade barriers.

New vegetable R&D

Results from the vegetable industry's Project Harvest consumer research study was also mentioned across print and broadcast media. AUSVEG spokesperson Dimi Kyriakou explained that healthy eating as

well as social and environmental responsibility are driving Australian food consumption.

Ms Kyriakou also appeared in broadcast media to discuss the promising results from levy-funded research into the effectiveness of using commercial frost cloths to protect susceptible vegetable crops during winter.



Communication of R&D projects in the Australian vegetable industry was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.
Project Number: VG15027

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CALENDAR

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2016 National Horticulture Convention

Where: RACV Royal Pines, Gold Coast

What: The highly anticipated National Horticulture Convention will return to the Gold Coast with a program that is bigger and better than ever. This year's Convention will be co-hosted by AUSVEG, Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL), the Central Markets Association of Australia in partnership with Fresh Markets Australia (CMAA-FMA), Growcom, Australian Organic and Persimmons Australia Inc.

Further Information: Please contact AUSVEG on (03) 9882 0277 or email convention@ausveg.com.au. To register online, visit registration.hortconv.com.au.

26 June 2016

2016 Practicalities for Exporting Vegetables Symposium

Where: RACV Royal Pines, Gold Coast

What: With many growers expressing a desire to commence exporting or to build on their current export capabilities, a practical seminar has been developed to assist Australian vegetable growers in supplying fresh, clean and safe produce to the world. This event will provide a practical overview of the export process, while also providing insights into the demand for Australian vegetables in export markets.

Further Information: Please contact AUSVEG on (03) 9882 0277 or email info@ausveg.com.au.

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The deciding factor: comparing costs and benefits

RUNNING A FARMING BUSINESS INVOLVES MAKING NUMEROUS FINANCIAL DECISIONS, WHICH CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION. A HELPFUL TOOL IN MAKING THESE DECISIONS IS COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS. AUSVEG ECONOMIST ANDREW KRUUP EXPLAINS HOW THIS ANALYSIS ALLOWS GROWERS TO COMPARE THE BENEFITS AND COSTS RELATED TO ANY POTENTIAL PROJECT OR DECISION.

Cost-benefit analysis is an important tool for both business and financial decision making. Put simply, the process of conducting a cost-benefit analysis involves listing all the known positives (benefits) and negatives (costs) associated with a particular project.

Each of these benefits and costs are quantified by being attributed a monetary value. If the sum of the benefits outweighs the sum of the costs (a net positive benefit) then the project should be undertaken.

An advantage of undertaking a methodological approach to project evaluation is the ability to be able to compare projects. If two independent projects are expected to both generate a net positive benefit, costly resources can be allocated to the project that brings the highest return to the business, by using cost-benefit analysis as a determining criterion.

Cost-benefit analysis also provides advantages from both a planning and a decision-making perspective. The act of listing all the positives and negatives associated with a given proposal can provide important information on the profitability of a given project. Conducting a cost-benefit analysis can also assist in brainstorming and conceptualising possible outcomes that may arise from undertaking a project. In this sense, conducting a cost-benefit analysis can act as an important reflective process for business proposals.

Identifying the costs

In economics, costs are divided into two subgroups called implicit and explicit costs. Explicit costs are best described as stereotypical costs that usually involve financial transactions. For example, the explicit cost in purchasing additional machinery for your farm is the purchase price that must be paid in order to obtain the product.

The second subgroup of costs are implicit, or opportunity costs. Opportunity costs represent the value of an alternative opportunity that is lost. For example, the opportunity cost of going to work for the day would be the value placed upon the next best alternative – for instance, enjoying leisure time at home.

Accounting for opportunity costs is an important part of conducting an accurate cost-benefit analysis. By factoring in the value of the lost alternative, a project that is estimated to create a positive net benefit is clearly a better decision than allocating the resources to the alternative.

Quantifying implicit costs

One challenge faced by economists is how to quantify both explicit and implicit costs and benefits. As mentioned, a monetary value is typically attributed to each benefit

and cost. It is often not easy, however, to place a value on some costs, particularly opportunity costs.

In the previous example, the opportunity cost of going to work would be the value placed upon leisure time. The question is then, how can a value be placed on leisure time in order to be able to conduct an accurate cost-benefit analysis?

In this case, economists use what is known as a 'shadow price'. A shadow price is the estimated price of a good or service for which no market price exists. In the case of determining a shadow price for leisure, one could use unemployment benefits as an estimate for the value of leisure time. Assuming that unemployment benefits are roughly \$300 per fortnight, this equates to \$30 per working day. Therefore, it can be determined that the opportunity cost of working would be the \$30 in unemployment benefits that would be sacrificed.

Of course, the previous example is not perfect as there are obviously some intangible benefits that a person gets from relaxing, in addition to the \$30 in unemployment benefits. Being able to place a more precise dollar figure on this benefit, however, can often be difficult to justify and so the shadow price is used as the closest estimate of the true opportunity cost.

A farming scenario

The following is an example of a very basic cost-benefit analysis that demonstrates the ideas discussed in this article. In this example, ABC Vegetable Farms is thinking about purchasing an additional 100 hectares of farm land for its operations. The costs and benefits of this acquisition are identified in Table 1 below.

As you can see from Table 1, the grower has identified that the purchase of additional

land will likely bring in crop sales revenue of \$1,800,000 (identified as a benefit). Furthermore, the explicit costs associated with the project include the purchase of the land (\$1,000,000) as well as the purchase of labour and equipment to work the land (\$750,000).

The implicit cost (opportunity cost) of purchasing land is the interest that could have been earned if the funds had instead been invested in the bank. In the example, this hypothetical investment is expected to have returned \$20,000.

Having evaluated and quantified the benefits and costs in this very simple example, you can see that ABC Vegetable Farms should undertake this project, as the total benefits (\$1,800,000) exceed the total costs (\$1,770,000), resulting in a net positive benefit of \$30,000.

An objective decision

Cost-benefit analysis is an import tool for economists and business decision makers. Conducting an in-depth analysis of the likely costs and benefits for a given project is important for both planning and reflection.

The most important aspect to cost-benefit analysis is to always make sure that the process is as objective as possible.

By ensuring the objectivity of the analysis, figures will be as accurate as possible and growers will be able to make informed business decisions.

i For more information, please contact AUSVEG.
 Phone: (03) 9882 0277
 Email: info@ausveg.com.au

The Economist Sub-Program was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG15027

**Horticulture
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 Australia**

Table 1: Example cost-benefit analysis

Benefits	\$	Costs	\$
Crop Sales Revenue	\$1,800,000	Land	\$1,000,000
		Labour and equipment	\$750,000
		Invested Funds	\$20,000





Left to right: Trandos Farms Managing Directors Arthur Trandos, Jim Trandos and Michael Trandos.

Solar power: helping veggie farmers grow their business

THE SUN'S ENERGY CAN BE USED FOR MORE THAN JUST VEGETABLE GROWTH – IT CAN ALSO BE USED TO POWER THE ENTIRE FARM. MANY VEGETABLE GROWERS ARE NOW DISCOVERING HOW THE BENEFITS OF SOLAR ENERGY CAN EXTEND TO REDUCING OVERHEADS AND PROMOTING A CLEAN, GREEN IMAGE TO CLIENTS.

While the sun is essential for growing vegetables, it can also be harnessed to reduce growers' operating costs.

The agricultural industry is a particularly good candidate for the use of solar energy. Most growers require constant electricity, operate directly under the sun and have more than enough space for solar power equipment. These factors are inspiring more growers to use renewable energy, which is allowing them to enjoy benefits such as lower overheads and increased profits.

Making the switch

Eight months ago, Trandos Farms contacted Solargain – the largest consolidated solar power and hot water company in Australia – after hearing that other growers had found success with solar energy. As the largest grower of sweet corn and beans in Western Australia, supplying both national and international customers, Trandos Farms wanted to find a way to counteract its significant energy costs, which were largely due to ongoing cold storage and irrigation pumping.

By installing a 100kW solar power system and using energy-saving strategies such as load shifting (transferring more energy usage to daylight hours) the owners of Trandos Farms said that switching to solar made a big difference to their bottom line.

Solar saves money

The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company, a family-run business north of Perth, also installed a 100kW solar power system with Solargain to combat the costs of running machinery. The company uses large amounts of electricity to harvest, pick and mix lettuce varieties into salad packs.

A total of 400 solar panels were required as part of the installation. The panels were split and installed in different locations around the farm using multiple roof spaces and inverters.

Maureen Dobra, co-owner of the Loose Leaf Lettuce Company, saw an immediate impact.

"Our energy bills have gone from \$14,000 per month down to \$7,000," she said.

With a focus on the future, Maureen believes that making the switch to solar energy is a profitable move for vegetable growers.

"The way I see it, I buy a car on hire purchase for five years and in five years' time it is worth half the value. With the solar panels, we expect that in three to five years' time I will have paid for it and after that it is making me money," she said.

The green appeal

While the money-saving benefits are certainly attractive, many businesses are also installing

solar power to reduce their environmental impact. The system installed at the Loose Leaf Lettuce Company will prevent approximately 147.75 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year. This is the equivalent of removing 31 cars from the road annually.

Growers may find that an added benefit of solar energy is that the clean, green image is attractive to potential clients.



For more information, please contact Solargain on 1300 73 93 55 or visit solargain.com.au.



Loose Leaf Lettuce Company Co-owner Maureen Dobra.

Agribusiness merger sets positive outlook for Tasmanian growers

E.E. MUIR AND SONS HAS BEEN PROVIDING SUPERIOR SERVICES AND PRODUCTS TO A WIDE RANGE OF RURAL ENTERPRISES FOR OVER 80 YEARS. THE COMPANY WILL NOW EXTEND ITS OFFERINGS TO TASMANIA, WITH THE ACQUISITION OF RESPECTED AGRICULTURAL SERVICES PROVIDER SERVE-AG. THE MERGER WILL ALLOW TASMANIAN GROWERS TO BENEFIT FROM A WIDER RANGE OF PRODUCTS AND AGRONOMY EXPERTISE.

E.E. Muir and Sons has become the only privately-owned agribusiness with representation in every Australian state, following its recent acquisition of Tasmanian business Serve-Ag.

After 30 years of friendly business dealings with the company, E.E. Muir and Sons Managing Director Ian Muir explained that he and his colleagues were happy to join the two companies together when the time was right.

"We respected the fact that they were providing an excellent service and we would never have gone to Tasmania to

compete with them," Mr Muir said.

"When the opportunity came to buy their business it was a very easy decision for us to make – to join the two groups together as a united Australian coverage agronomy service provider."

While the two companies will continue to operate independently of each other, Mr Muir confirmed that there will be no reduction of services or products. However, Tasmanian customers may be introduced to some new products.

New opportunities

The merger will also provide the opportunity for Serve-Ag's agronomists to gain new experience and knowledge, as a result of being part of a large, nation-wide business.

"The whole business combined will have about 120 agronomists," Mr Muir explained.

"We've already got three forums where the agronomy group is going to be coming together in the next couple of months to share ideas, to share experiences and to network with each other."

Mr Muir expressed his excitement for the new venture, which officially took place on 2 May 2016.

"It's a fantastic position to be in and it's come out of 89 years of hard work by the Muir family. We're very proud to hold this position and it's not something we take lightly," he said.

"It's a huge responsibility to be a company that covers all of Australia, but we feel we can do it well and we're really looking forward to it!"



For more information, please contact your local E.E. Muir and Sons or Serve-Ag branch.



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Minor use permits

Permit Number	Crop	Pesticide Group	Active	Pest/Plant disease/ Target weed	Date Issued	Expiry Date	Permit Holder	States
PER12612 Version 2	Potatoes	Insecticide	Alpha-cypermethrin	Garden weevil	29-Jun-11	30-Apr-21	Growcom	WA & TAS only
PER82341	Cucumber, Peppers, Zucchini, Eggplant, Bitter melon, Sin qua and Tomatoes (field and protected) and Snake beans (field only)	Miticide	Bifenazate	Red tomato spider mite and Two spotted mite	29-Mar-16	31-Mar-21	Growcom	All states (except VIC)
PER81702	Cucumber (field and protected), Rocket, Silverbeet, Spinach, Brassica leafy vegetables and Radish	Insecticide	Alpha-cypermethrin	Loopers, Vegetable weevil, Plague thrips, Cabbage white butterfly, Cluster caterpillar, Heliothis and Redlegged earth mite	24-Mar-16	31-Mar-21	Growcom	All states (except VIC)
PER14765 Version 2	Cucurbits, Fruiting vegetables (other than cucurbits, Sweet corn or Mushrooms), Snow peas, Sugar snap peas (protected and field) and Potatoes	Miticide	Hexythiazox	Tomato russet mite, Broad mite, Two spotted mite and Tomato red mite	21-Feb-15	31-Mar-18	Growcom	All states
PER13673 Version 2	Silverbeet, Spinach and Celery	Fungicide	Mancozeb	Downy mildew and Septoria leaf spot/Late blight	22-Apr-13	30-Sep-21	Growcom	All states (except VIC)
PER82428	Fruiting vegetables (cucurbits), Fruiting vegetables (other than cucurbits), Legume vegetables, Root and tuber vegetables, Silverbeet, Myoga, Ginger, Rakkyo, Shallot, Turmeric, Parsley and Celery	Insecticide	Methomyl	Helicoverpa spp., Cucumber moth, Cluster caterpillar, Loopers, Webworm, Rutherglen bug and Thrips (including WFT)	22-Apr-16	31-Mar-19	Growcom	All states (except VIC)
PER82572	Sweetpotato (transplanted crops only)	Nematicide	Fluensulfone	Root knot nematode	15-Apr-16	31-Jan-20	Growcom	NSW, QLD, WA and NT only

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>



MINOR USE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Minor Use Awareness Program: Latest news

THROUGH THE MINOR USE AWARENESS PROGRAM, AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND THE MODES OF ACTION OF DIFFERENT CHEMICALS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF PEST RESISTANCE DEVELOPING.

Fungicides, insecticides and herbicides all have different chemical structures to target particular pests. Many years of investment, research and effort are required before these chemicals are approved for use by growers across Australia as a means of controlling a pest issue and minimising the damage caused by those pests.

While crop protection companies are committed to the development and release of new chemical compounds and new modes of action, existing compounds need to have their effective life extended. It is important that growers use chemical control methods

responsibly, to ensure longevity of the chemistry.

Growers are, effectively, one of the stewards for the chemicals they use. They look after the land, and the chemistries they use. Resistance management is a vital concept for this – understanding the modes of action for the pesticides that are used is integral for the future preservation of the chemistry.

CropLife has created and distributed guides into resistance management and listed the modes of action for use by industry and stakeholders. Understanding and rotating between modes of action to reduce the risk of

resistance emerging in the pest population is vital.

When there are limited options

When available modes of action to control a pest issue are

limited, please contact AUSVEG. The AUSVEG Minor Use and Agronomy Coordinator can provide important resources to assist with your minor use issues.

Alternative options may be discussed if nothing is currently available to control a pest issue.



For more information or to request any of the minor use forms, please contact AUSVEG Minor Use and Agronomy Coordinator Scott Kwasny on (03) 9882 0277, email minoruse@ausveg.com.au or visit ausveg.com.au/minoruse.

The Minor Use Awareness Program has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the National Vegetable Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Project Number: VG13096



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Left to right: Queensland Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Leanne Donaldson with Growcom CEO Pat Hannan at the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network launch held in Bundaberg.



Pat Hannan: The times they are a-changin’

QUEENSLAND HORTICULTURE’S PEAK REPRESENTATIVE BODY, GROWCOM, HAS RECENTLY UNDERGONE SOME MAJOR CHANGES TO ENSURE THE ORGANISATION CONTINUES TO BE RELEVANT AND VALUABLE TO THE STATE’S GROWERS. DIRECTING THESE CHANGES IS CEO PAT HANNAN, WHOSE WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE IN THE INDUSTRY HAS PROVED ESSENTIAL IN THE PROCESS.

Growcom, the Queensland representative body for vegetable growers, has been in existence since 1923. When the current CEO of the organisation, Pat Hannan, joined Growcom 11 months ago, he was happy to take on the challenge of updating the organisation.

“Growcom, like so many organisations in agribusiness at the moment, has to reinvent itself a little bit to survive,” Mr Hannan said.

“Funding isn’t as plentiful as it used to be, and it continues to diminish, so an organisation really has to future-proof itself by becoming more relevant to the people it represents.”

With an impressive career to draw experience from, Mr Hannan was an obvious choice to take on the role.

“I’ve got about 20 years (of experience) in the private sector and 20 years in the public sector behind me,” he said.

“I’ve been lucky – I’ve done a lot of different things during my career. I spent a large part of

my early career in the financial services industry, and did a lot of consulting in that area.”

Mr Hannan’s career highlights include setting up and managing the state divisions of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA). He has also worked in state and federal primary industries, helping to set up the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy (NAQS).

The challenge of change

With this valuable experience behind him, Mr Hannan relished the challenge of reinventing Growcom, but admits it was not without its difficulties.

“Growcom has a lot of history and culture, and a lot of people who have been here for a long time. Everybody had to embrace

change, and look at new directions that would see the business being able to sustain itself in the future,” he said.

“Restructure and cultural change is a tough gig, and it’s a work in progress – these things don’t happen overnight.”

While change is never easy, Mr Hannan is excited to make Growcom even more valuable to the state’s growers.

“We’re starting to plot a course that sees the business future-proof itself, which essentially means that it will aim to become profitable and to look ‘outside-in’ – finding out what the growers want and demand of us, and providing that.”

Exciting times

Mr Hannan admits that none of this would be possible without the help of growers.

“I think I’m learning a lot more from them than they are from me,” he laughed.


“Growers provide feedback to

Growcom all the time, and we’re always appreciative of that. They guide our policy and they’re helping to determine what sorts of services Growcom provides.”

A result of this feedback is Hort 360, an innovation program that Mr Hannan is excited to introduce to growers within the coming months.

“Hort 360 encompasses a range of services that are aimed at helping growers to take a 360 degree look at their property and their business and work out ways to make it better,” he said.

“All of these initiatives are going to be rolled out over the next three to six months, and there’ll be some really exciting stuff all focused around the grower, because that’s who we represent.”

 For more information, please contact Pat Hannan (07) 3620 3844 or phannan@growcom.com.au.

AUSVEG SA recognises leading growers

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S LEADING VEGETABLE GROWERS WERE RECOGNISED AT THE RECENT AUSVEG SA AND WILLIAM BUCK VEGETABLE INDUSTRY DINNER AND AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE, WITH OVER 160 GROWERS AND INDUSTRY MEMBERS GATHERING TO CELEBRATE THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE STATE'S VEGETABLE INDUSTRY.



Grower of the Year Winner, Duy Ly.



Young Grower of Year, Thang Hoang Le (aka "Aussie Kev") and David Schirripa, Chairman of the South Australian Produce Market.

The AUSVEG SA and William Buck Vegetable Industry Dinner and Awards for Excellence, which was held at the Arkaba Hotel on Thursday 28 April, provided an opportunity to showcase the dedication to high quality produce, innovation and leadership within South Australia's vegetable industry.

The winners of the AUSVEG SA Awards for Excellence are now in the running for the National Awards for Excellence, to be held during the 2016 National Horticulture Convention on the Gold Coast on 25 June. These winners include Duy Ly, winner of the prestigious Grower of the Year award and Thang Hoang Le, who was awarded Young Grower of the Year.

AUSVEG SA State Manager Jordan Brooke-Barnett was

thrilled to see the award winners receive the recognition they deserve.

"South Australian growers are incredibly resilient, despite the challenges posed by high labour costs and access to infrastructure," Mr Brooke-Barnett said.

"The Awards for Excellence recognise South Australian growers, researchers and other industry participants for their leadership, dedication and expertise in providing high quality produce to consumers and adopting innovation to improve productivity and profitability in the industry."

A vital industry

Mr Brooke-Barnett noted that the state's vegetable and potato

growers are especially vital to the South Australian economy now that car manufacturer Holden has left the state.

"The South Australian vegetable and potato industries are the lifeblood of regional areas in the state, with growers and agribusinesses actively involved in their communities," he said.

"This event was a tremendous success and it would not have been possible without the wholehearted support of South Australia's growers and industry members.

"Each individual and business who was nominated for an award has demonstrated their commitment and dedication to the industry, and I congratulate all of the award winners on their success."

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE WINNERS:

- Grower of the Year (proudly sponsored by Peats Soil)
 - **Duy Ly**
- Young Grower of the Year (proudly sponsored by the South Australian Produce Market)
 - **Thang Hoang Le (aka "Aussie Kev")**
- Rising Star Award (proudly sponsored by William Buck)
 - **Tony Catanzariti**
- Industry Impact (proudly sponsored by Elders)
 - **Mark Glazbrook**
- Community Stewardship (proudly sponsored by Cropping Solutions)
 - **Peter Wadewitz**
- Environmental Award (proudly sponsored by Peats Soil)
 - **Graeme Pitchford**
- Innovation Partner (proudly sponsored by Boomaroo Nurseries)
 - **Alli Peacock, Pricewaterhouse Coopers**
- Innovative Marketing (proudly sponsored by Ironwood Careers and Training)
 - **Don Ruggiero**
- Women in Horticulture (proudly sponsored by ANZ)
 - **Monika Fiebig, Monika's Organics**
- Researcher of the Year (proudly sponsored by William Buck)
 - **Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia (PIRSA) for the Adelaide Hills 'Pest Free Area' project**



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Around the states

Northern Territory



The 2016 vegetable season in the Top End started early this year with the petering out of the rather pathetic 2015-16 Wet Season. Most areas in the Darwin rural area received only about two thirds of their average rainfall, reducing the yearly recharge of the ground water aquifers. This could be an issue later in the Dry as the Top End producers rely on these aquifers for irrigated horticulture for the entire Dry Season.

Cucurbit growers are working to comply with the new Cucumber green mottle mosaic virus (CGMMV) regulations in the NT, which require these growers to have a farm biosecurity plan. NT Farmers is assisting in developing

on-farm biosecurity plans to protect individual farms in the NT, maintain interstate market access, manage the spread and, hopefully, eventually eradicate the virus.

NT Farmers presented the Northern Australia Food Futures Conference in Darwin from 11-13 April. The conference aimed to find out what investors want in agriculture and what Northern Australia has to offer in agriculture. This was the second Food Futures Conference, building on the 2014 event that highlighted the areas of opportunity for agricultural development in the north. The 'Developing the North' agenda is gaining momentum and this conference was designed to strategically link current successful models and players in northern agriculture with potential investment.

Ministers from the Federal, Queensland, WA and NT governments participated in the Conference along with senior government agency staff, industry representatives and leading agribusinesses from across Australia.

Delegates heard from investors, agribusinesses and a diverse range of successful farmers on the ground in the north about different investment models that are working and can provide guidance for new investment. A common theme was the need for consistent policies on issues like water allocation and licensing, land access and environmental regulations over a time span that was attractive to investment and doesn't change with the political cycles in Australia.

The conference was kept grounded by farmers who have succeeded in the north

telling their stories of success. Farmers from Broome and the Kimberlies, throughout the Territory and on to Cape York prove it is possible to develop successful agribusinesses using a raft of different investment and developmental strategies.

Indigenous participation in agriculture was also featured, including the Gooniyandi Association in Fitzroy Crossing working with GoGo Station, farming Traditional Owner land at Ali Curung, Centrefarm and the WA Government experience with the Mowanjum community.

Greg Owens

NT Farmers Association
Vegetable Grower Engagement
Officer
Mobile: 0437 092 551
Email: greg@ntfarmers.org.au
Website: www.ntfarmers.org.au

Tasmania



An exciting project that TFGA is part of is the Water for Profit Program that has been set up to help Tasmanian vegetable farmers get the most out of their investments in irrigation.

The three-year program, which started last year, is being delivered by TFGA, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA).

Key components of the program include local farmer-to-farmer learning groups, adaptation of innovative decision modelling tools, improved information on soil

characteristics and mapping of crop suitability at the property scale.

Through the farmer learning groups led by TIA, they have identified some priorities including:

- Water use efficiency and efficiency around system design;
- Crop efficiency, including timing and rotation;
- Application strategies, such as frequency and quantity of irrigation; and
- Monitoring equipment, including what tools can best help them make informed decisions.

The program will be hands-on, with farmers investigating what farming practices lead to better productivity, guiding development of irrigation and cropping decision support tools

as well as learning from each other and the collaborating scientists.

The 2015-16 summer has been exceptionally dry with some growers having to irrigate round-the-clock and seeing their power bills double or triple as a result. This program will provide more detailed information about irrigation scheduling and monitoring that will assist farmers to make the best use of their water during such events.

DPIPWE is expanding its present soil and climate modelling program to generate high reliability soil mapping for determining best match crop options with the physical and micro-climate characteristics of these areas.

This means farmers will be able to get information on frost risk, growing degree days and

other information relevant to the farming enterprises considering new crop options or expansion of existing enterprises.

TFGA believes collaboration is the key to the success for this project where effective research, development and extension activities can be delivered in partnership for the benefit of farmers and regional Tasmania.

Wayne Johnston

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Around the states

Queensland



Growcom supports the call for significant investment and broad scale reform of Biosecurity Queensland, as recommended by the Queensland Government's Biosecurity Capability Review finally released in April.

The Review recognised that Biosecurity Queensland lacks capacity and will need increased resourcing to transform its capability to meet the needs of the future. Biosecurity Queensland needs a makeover – and that will take a serious investment by government.

Overall, the reviewers made 32 specific recommendations with an initial investment of \$3 million in:

- The development of a biosecurity strategy and action plan and associated governance arrangements;
- Establishment of a new biosecurity response unit; and
- A skills audit and organisational redesign.

We are very pleased to see the emphasis on building expert and regional capacity as we have long been concerned about the growing gaps in expertise that arise as resources become depleted.

We are also pleased by the recognition of the importance of industry Best Management Practice (BMP) programs as mechanisms for delivering on-

farm biosecurity and assisting growers in meeting their general biosecurity obligations. Industry programs have also been recognised as mechanisms for reducing red tape and costly inefficiencies around interstate market access, which we wholeheartedly support.

The bottom line is that the review clearly shows that years of limited resourcing are really starting to create problems in our biosecurity capacity and this has impacted on our response to emergencies. It is time for government to step up to the plate and invest in this area. Industry is prepared to be part of the solution but government cannot shy away from the need to invest.

As peak production horticulture body, Growcom

provided detailed input into the review. It is gratifying that the perspectives we put forward have been reflected in the recommendations.

We are pleased with the overall recommendations made in the review, but now it is important that the recommendations are properly implemented.

Pat Hannan

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Western Australia



Neither wise men nor fools can work without tools. However, it can be well argued that the wise man has the larger and more judiciously curated tool box.

With this in mind, it is great to see more and more WA growers make use of the tools provided by vegetablesWA to analyse their fee for service data and participate in the portal we created to make domestic and export trading opportunities. Growers are encouraged to speak to our Export Development Manager, Dominic Jenkin, to either set up an account or get some assistance in making the most of these tools that are unique

to WA growers.

The Potato Growers Association of WA has welcomed a new Executive Officer in Simon Moltoni. Many growers will be very familiar with Simon from his various roles, such as being on the Board of Western Potatoes and as part of the Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), as well as being a former seed potato grower himself. His industry background will be useful as the potato industry faces difficult times with the recently announced deregulation of the domestic ware potato marketing system. Ross Taylor is still actively assisting the potato industry after having passed on his role as Acting Executive Officer to Simon. I know that the industry continues to appreciate Ross' dedication and excellent

contribution to the cause.

Unwelcome news from the recent vegetablesWA grower meeting with the Department of Water in Wanneroo is that they're looking to reduce allocations on the Gngangara Mound by 25 per cent over the coming decade. This would clearly have significant impacts on grower viability and land values. There is also an issue for industry and government to deal with given the ongoing zoning of current growing areas as 'Rural' rather than 'Urban' until at least 2050. vegetablesWA is working with government to progress a community reference group to look at moving water from the Alkimos treatment plant to growers, allowing growers to move into the pine forestry and rezoning.

WA had a significant win on 11 March when a Queensland Fruit Fly incursion detected in suburban Perth was declared as successfully eradicated. We are now working with government and other horticulture industries to plan ahead for how we can work together better in case of another incursion.

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Around the states

South Australia



In the lead-up to the South Australian State Budget in May, AUSVEG SA has been pushing the message that it is well and truly time to back horticulture in Adelaide's north. It has long been recognised that the vegetable and wider horticulture industries are poised to provide job growth in the wake of the Holden closure, but much of the effort to date has been piecemeal or too small to make a real impact.

While the South Australian Government has allocated investments to establish a Northern Adelaide Food Park, there has been little

action to directly support the horticulture industry. AUSVEG SA would like to see a focus on addressing some of the fundamental disadvantages that growers face in the state as part of any planned initiatives. South Australian growers are flagging behind other states due to a lack of water and land infrastructure and prohibitively higher energy prices. In addition, pressure from revenue-hungry government departments looking to balance the books and a lack of skilled migration are further hurting our sector.

If the South Australian Government is truly committed to making food production a centrepiece of the state's economy, it must move beyond

marketing slogans and deliver fundamental improvements to doing business in the state.

AUSVEG SA has been working closely with government departments and politicians at all levels to put forward proposed investments to improve our South Australian horticulture industry. At its centre are new investments in water and land infrastructure which would put South Australia on an equal footing with other states. We are hopeful the government has listened and, as a result, included a meaningful contribution to horticulture in the next state budget.

On a more positive note, AUSVEG SA recently hosted the AUSVEG SA and William Buck Vegetable Industry Awards

for Excellence in late April. AUSVEG SA is proud to have many innovative growers and young talent cropping up in our industry and we were pleased to celebrate the achievements of a solid group of winners. South Australian award winners will go on to compete at the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence and we hope that a number of the state's nominees are successful at the national level this year.

Jordan Brooke-Barnett

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New South Wales



At the end of March, NSW Farmers welcomed the agreement by the states and territories to reform Country of Origin Labelling laws, which will provide genuine transparency to consumers on where their food originates from.

NSW Farmers believes that

the new system, which will require businesses to indicate on a number of food items if the product was made, produced or grown in Australia, will provide consistency of information and will allow food manufacturers to accurately reflect what their product consists of.

NSW Farmers has also been urging the Australian Government to rethink the ill-considered changes to working holiday makers' taxation arrangements, which will tax working holiday makers at 32.5

per cent on all income.

NSW Farmers believes that this tax measure will deter backpackers from coming to Australia, which will result in a loss to the agricultural sector, and more broadly the tourism industry and rural and regional economies.

In late March, the Australian Government established an inter-departmental committee to consider industry concerns. NSW Farmers was able to reinforce to the workshop and government that action

is required to deal with the perception that Australia is an unfavourable location for working holiday makers, and that the position of 'revenue neutral' must not further impact on backpacker numbers.

Brett Guthrey

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Victoria



Victoria's leading vegetable and potato growers have been recognised at the inaugural AUSVEG VIC Awards for Excellence, with over 160 growers and industry members gathering to celebrate the significant contributions of members of the vegetable and potato industries.

The Awards for Excellence, which were held at Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club on Friday 22 April, provided an opportunity

to celebrate the high quality produce, innovation and leadership within the Victorian vegetable and potato industries.

The winners of the Awards for Excellence were as follows:

- Andrew Bulmer – Grower of the Year (proudly sponsored by E.E. Muir and Sons).
- Daniel Maher – Young Grower of the Year, (Les Giroud Testimonial Award).
- Robert Lamattina – Rising Star of the Year (proudly sponsored by Bejo Seeds).

- Jill Briggs – Industry Impact.
- Glenn Favero – Community Stewardship.
- Chris Millis – Environmental Award (proudly sponsored by Werribee South Farm Supplies).
- E. E. Muir and Sons – Innovation Partner (proudly sponsored by Mode Logistics).
- Schreurs and Sons – Innovative Marketing.
- Emma Germano – Women in Horticulture (proudly sponsored by Boomaroo).

- Dolf de Boer – Researcher of the Year. AUSVEG VIC congratulates all of the award winners.

This event was a huge success and it would not have been possible without the support of Victoria's growers and the wider industry.

AUSVEG VIC

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