

vegenotes





VG16004: DEVELOPING TECHNICAL GUIDELINES AND A BEST PRACTICE EXTENSION TOOLBOX FOR GREENHOUSE CONSTRUCTION AND SAFE OPERATION

FACILITATORS

Project VG16004 was completed by Osborn Consulting Engineers, RM Consulting Group (RMCG), FERM Fire Engineers and Doyles Construction Lawyers.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the technical requirements for greenhouse construction and safe operation can be a steep learning curve for growers seeking to establish, expand or modify a greenhouse or grow structure. Navigating local government approval processes for construction can be complex. This can be made even more daunting by the fact that the National Construction Code (NCC) does not currently have specific requirements for greenhouse structures.

Through better understanding of safe management practices, approval processes and other issues associated with NCC compliance, growers may be better placed to avoid unexpected expenses and delays when designing and building their greenhouses.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Developing technical guidelines and a best practice extension toolbox for greenhouse construction and safe operation (VG16004) focused on developing two important outcomes for the vegetable industry.

The first was a submission of a Proposal for Change to the NCC to incorporate specific classification guidelines for greenhouse structures.

The second was the development of a suite of resources to assist growers in planning for the construction and operation of greenhouses and grow structures. This led to the creation of a website featuring a series of easy-to-read fact sheets covering greenhouse design and planning.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Recognising the frustrations experienced by growers seeking to develop new greenhouse structures, a team of technical specialists led by Osborn Consulting Engineers, set about developing a Proposal for Change to the NCC.

According to Project Lead Marcel Olivotto, growers typically encounter roadblocks when trying to obtain council approvals for their greenhouses and are being forced to implement expensive and, in many cases, unnecessary, compliance measures in order to gain approval.

"The roadblocks are almost always around fire compliance and egress (exit) compliance. In some cases, councils are treating the greenhouses like factories, and growers are being asked to install expensive fire-related sprinkler systems in addition to their crop irrigation systems in order to comply with the Code," Mr Olivotto said.

A team of construction engineers, fire engineers and construction lawyers were involved in developing the Proposal for Change, which was presented to industry in May 2017, and submitted to the Australian Building Codes Board in September 2017.

The proposal is currently being considered and if successful, will be adopted by states and territories in May 2019.

The second part of the project involved the development of the Toolbox for Greenhouse Construction and Safe Operation, available online at greenhousetoolbox.com.

According to RMCG Senior Consultant Carl Larsen, the toolbox aims to improve industry awareness and knowledge of the regulations associated with greenhouse construction and compliance.

"What we have done is condense very technical information into a series of snappy two-page fact sheets around the key points to be considered at each particular stage of greenhouse development," Mr Larsen said.

The toolbox covers 13 areas, ranging from understanding the basics – such as site selection and layout – through to navigating the requirements of local government approval processes.

"The toolbox offers growers guidance for getting their greenhouse built, and prompts them to ask the right questions of the right people throughout the process," Mr Larsen added.

Supporting the fact sheets are several case studies, providing real-life examples of how growers have tackled issues during the construction process.

Mr Larsen hopes that the toolbox may also become a valuable resource for local government planning staff, helping them to better understand the needs of the industry and offer practical guidance to growers during early stages of planning.

CONCLUSION

If implemented, the Proposal for Change to the NCC could make it easier for vegetable growers to build greenhouse structures on their farm.

"Incorporating specific technical information relating to greenhouses within the NCC would mean that compliance would be a non-issue for many growers. Once there is guidance within the documentation, councils will be able to work within those guidelines with clarity, making it easier for growers to move forward with developments," Mr Olivotto said.

Growers are encouraged to start with the toolbox if looking to build, expand or modify a greenhouse on their property.

"Make sure you get the basics right. Consider site selection and design at the start to avoid delays or costly mistakes. I also encourage growers to engage early and often with both regulatory agencies and neighbours so that complaints and appeals against applications can be avoided down the track," Mr Larsen said.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is a strategic levy investment under the Hort Innovation Vegetable Fund.

VG16004 was funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.



VG16026: ADDRESSING VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION THROUGH FOOD SERVICE ORGANISATIONS (CHEFS, TAFES AND OTHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS)

FACILITATORS

Project VG16026 was completed by Workshop Australia Pty Ltd CEO Jamie Kwong.

INTRODUCTION

Research from Hort Innovation and Deloitte Access Economics has identified that more than 90 per cent of Australians fail to eat their recommended five or more serves of vegetables every day. In addition, Australians are eating out more than ever – on average, the population dines out 2-3 times a week, which equates to more than 50 million meals, or 2.5 billion meals annually. This presents an opportunity to use more vegetables in meals available at food service organisations such as cafes, restaurants and fast-food outlets.

Following on from previous Hort Innovation strategic levy investments such as *Market research for investigating opportunities for more vegetable meal occasions (VG14026)*, Workshop Australia was assigned the project *Addressing Vegetable Consumption through Food Service Organisations (Chefs, TAFEs and Other Training Institutions)*, a scoping study initiated by Hort Innovation to investigate the potential to create more interest in using vegetables among cooks and chefs.

“Chefs have a broad reach and are key influencers of diets, often instigating and growing food trends,” Workshop Australia Pty Ltd CEO Jamie Kwong said.

“The belief was, that by influencing chefs (established and up-and-coming), their increased understanding, appreciation and interest in vegetables would flow through to reach many more consumers, improving overall vegetable sales and consumption.”

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This project aimed to develop a suggested program outline, encompassing a variety of options for successive stages to:

- Create interest among cooks, chefs, and food service/hospitality industry students in vegetables, expanding their awareness and knowledge of vegetable health benefits, cooking techniques and other attributes.
- Educate cooks, chefs and food service/hospitality industry students about how to incorporate more vegetables into their menus, and understand how this can be financially beneficial to their business.
- Consider ways to incorporate vegetables into additional meal occasions.

The research methodology incorporated desktop research and primary research in the form of in-depth interviews and group discussions.

Workshop Australia considered the specific knowledge gaps and issues to address in the food services sector such as understanding food trends, cultures and alternative meal occasions using vegetables.

“In order to engage the food service audience in such a drive, it became obvious how crucial it was that we reach the industry at all stages of their career – student, apprentice, head chef. From initial research, it was clear that a range of educational and inspirational content should be incorporated to be effective,” Mr Kwong said.

MAJOR FINDINGS

During this study, it was discovered that the impact of high profile chefs on the industry and students (as well as consumers) is the single most motivating driver of change. Therefore, celebrity chef Kylie Kwong was engaged as a project champion to reiterate the importance of understanding and connecting with suppliers/local community to provide the best of the season/area/value.

It was proposed that the focus of any resultant program should primarily be on two key groups: students who could eventually be in the position of authority, alongside the high profile influential chefs themselves.

Based on this research, a three-pronged approach was recommended which included:

- **Educate “how to” (deliver content):** A website hub created for the hospitality industry presenting information in a highly visual, engaging manner.
- **Inspire enquiry (distribution strategy):** Using a social media account of a chef to reach a wide audience of decision-makers within the industry; engaging an industry expert to offer a website; cooking masterclasses; conducting talks/seminars at industry events; and industry advertising.
- **Motivate engagement (build momentum and ongoing content creation):** Looking at ways to get more involvement and engagement from the student cooks/chefs, as well as visibility from the top chefs, and initiate content creation for enhancing the program beyond year one.

CONCLUSION

Mr Kwong said growers’ consideration of next steps following the scoping study is important as they can help improve the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their produce among chefs.

“These in-depth relationships between the growers and the chefs will result in two-way information and inspiration sharing, better produce, better dishes, more engaged consumers and ultimately increased vegetable sales and consumption,” he said.

“Not only does this industry have access to a broad range of the population, but it also has a strong influence in developing food trends and eating behaviour among the early adopters within society.”

“Inspiring and engaging this diverse group of providers to understand, experience and trial incorporating more vegetables into their repertoire more often, could have a wide-reaching effect, which could impact positively on society and ultimately on growers’ domestic sales.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE BOTTOM LINE: DEVELOPING TECHNICAL GUIDELINES AND A BEST PRACTICE EXTENSION TOOLBOX FOR GREENHOUSE CONSTRUCTION AND SAFE OPERATION (VG16004)

Project VG16004 aimed to address the difficulties associated with greenhouse construction and safe operation, particularly in terms of meeting the necessary technical requirements and approval processes.

The two-part project resulted in the submission of a Proposal for Change to the National Construction Code to incorporate technical documentation around the construction of greenhouses. An online toolbox was also developed to help growers navigate the process of building, expanding or modifying a greenhouse structure on their farm.

The proposal for change engaged a team of technical specialists to document the specific regulatory requirements of greenhouse structures to facilitate their approval during local government planning processes. The proposal is currently being considered by the Australian Building Codes Board, and if accepted, will be implemented in May 2019.

The online toolbox is available at greenhousetoolbox.com, and features a series of 13 fact sheets and supporting case studies to help growers understand and navigate the process for designing, planning and building a greenhouse or grow structure.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, please contact Marcel Olivotto at marcel.o@osbornconsulting.com.au or Carl Larsen at carll@rmcg.com.au

The online toolbox is available at greenhousetoolbox.com.

THE BOTTOM LINE: ADDRESSING VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION THROUGH FOOD SERVICE ORGANISATIONS (CHEFS, TAFES AND OTHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS) (VG16026)

As Australians are dining out at an average of 2-3 times a week, Project VG16026 investigated the ways in which strong incremental vegetable consumption could be achieved by increasing their use in food service.

Desktop and primary research was conducted, which included in-depth interviews and group discussions. Specific knowledge gaps and issues in the food sector were considered by the project coordinator, Workshop Australia.

It was found that the industry, at all stages of their career (from students to apprentices and head chefs), needed to be educated and inspired to use fresh produce in their meals. High profile chef Kylie Kwong was brought in to be a project champion, reiterating the importance of connecting chefs with suppliers and the local community.

The project proposed that any resulting program's focus should primarily be on two key groups: students with the potential to be future leaders and the influential, high profile chefs themselves.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the project, please visit wshop.com.au or contact Workshop Australia Pty Ltd CEO Jamie Kwong on 0419 208 239 or at jamiiek@wshop.com.au.

The final report for this project is available on InfoVeg. Readers can search 'VG16026' on the InfoVeg database: ausveg.com.au/infoveg/infoveg-database.

ISSN: 1449 - 1397

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This communication has been funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

Project Number: VG15027

Please contact Michelle De'Lisle at AUSVEG via email at michelle.delisle@ausveg.com.au or call 03 9882 0277 to submit topics for potential inclusion in future editions of *Vegenotes*.

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