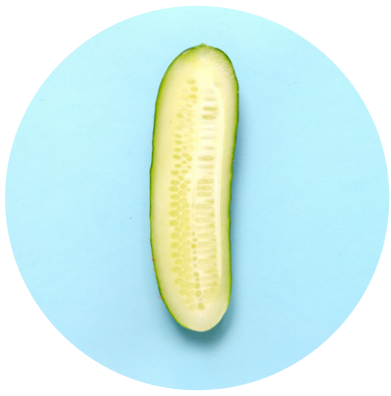


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VG16035: TRAINING GROWERS IN DIRECT CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT – SCOPING REPORT

FACILITATORS:

Project VG16035 was completed by Workshop Australia Pty Ltd CEO Jamie Kwong, Senior Business Directors Zoie Bache and Susan Coles and Senior Strategy Partner Tom McGillick.

INTRODUCTION

Many of Australia’s vegetable growers have a thirst to increase their marketing knowledge, following ongoing consumer interest in the provenance of fresh produce and understanding the people and practices behind the produce.

To help growers acquire this knowledge, Hort Innovation commissioned Workshop Australia to conduct a scoping project to design a bespoke ‘Direct Consumer Engagement Program’ for Australian vegetable growers to address potential knowledge gaps across marketing, with a focus on social media as the lowest cost of entry for most brands in marketing.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project VG16035 *Training Growers in Direct Consumer Engagement – Scoping Report* aimed to deliver a detailed program proposal for a series of training opportunities to build an appreciation for the difference between a business and a brand, and enhance grower skill sets (particularly across social media). This would ultimately enable growers to improve the viability and sustainability of their business by turning it into a brand.

Depending on where growers currently sit on the spectrum of marketing knowledge and experience, and due to the current lack of training programs specifically made available for them, the following knowledge gaps were likely to be prevalent:

- The difference between a business and a brand.
- How marketing, branding and consumer engagement work in principle.
- The marketing channels, platforms and opportunities that are available.
- The consumer brand journey; identifying and understanding an ideal customer, along with customer attraction and retention.
- Implementation of marketing activity, particularly across digital and social media.

MAJOR FINDINGS

As a result of this scoping study, Mr Kwong said that it became apparent that growers are likely to possess varied levels of marketing knowledge.

“Any training program investment needs to be broad and flexible enough to encompass both ends of the spectrum and everything in between,” he said.

“Building grower appreciation for, and knowledge of marketing is as equally important as demonstrating its practical applications.

“For a program to be effective and of quality, it needs to have logic, relevance, ease of navigation, inspiring content, and importantly, deliver that content in an engaging manner.”

The Direct Consumer Engagement Program encompasses five distinct phases: Information, Inspiration, Education, Implementation and Optimisation. For each program module, a detailed rationale was provided outlining overview and objectives, key benefits, methodology and output and was supported by case studies when appropriate.

The findings suggested that the proposed program should be made available in a range of formats (printable PDFs, audio and video files) to facilitate usage and maximise grower participation.

It was also found that marketing could assist with keeping the next generation of young farmers on the land, or lure them back to the farm, creating new roles and responsibilities.

Mr Kwong said that the Direct Consumer Engagement Program could take vegetable growers on an educational and instructional journey, enabling them to better engage their customers, whether they are wholesalers, retailers or the grocery buyer.

“It’s one that would be directly informed and designed by growers’ feedback, that can be joined at any stage depending on their existing level of marketing knowledge and activity, and the size or life stage of their business.”

CONCLUSION

Should levy-paying vegetable growers choose to invest in this program, Mr Kwong said they would benefit by gaining a well-informed, solid understanding and better appreciation of the power of marketing, and the role it can play in turning their business into a sustainable brand.

“Growers would have access to the necessary information, tools and resources to implement change in their businesses, with access to a ‘helpline’ for support, and importantly, they would have the motivation to do so,” he said.

“Ultimately, this would lead to more engaged growers with a greater level of influence and control over their sales, plus proactivity and business innovation within the domestic vegetable market from 2019 onwards. Not to mention a new avenue for succession planning and younger generation recruitment and retention.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

VG16035 was funded by Hort Innovation using the research and development vegetable levy and contributions from the Australian Government.



VG10081: BREEDING CAPSICUM FOR TOSPOVIRUS RESISTANCE

FACILITATORS:

Project VG10081 was completed by Des McGrath and Denis Persley from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in conjunction with Syngenta Seeds.

INTRODUCTION

Tomato spotted wilt virus and capsicum chlorosis virus belong to a group known as ‘tospoviruses’, which cause significant crop damage in the largest capsicum production areas of Queensland, with typical annual crop losses of \$15 million. In South Australia, tomato spotted wilt virus is responsible for major losses in the protected cropping industry.

While tomato spotted wilt virus is more widely distributed throughout Australia, capsicum chlorosis virus is prevalent in Bundaberg and the northern Dry Tropics of Queensland, to the extent that it can become the predominant virus at certain times through the season.

The effect of tospovirus on capsicums is profound. To a consumer’s eye, the virus distorts the shape of the fruit as well as scarring its skin and reducing its size, which ultimately reduces marketable yield.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In recent years, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) Principal Horticulturist Des McGrath and Principal Plant Pathologist Denis Persley were able to identify genetic resistance to tospovirus in bell capsicums. This was undertaken as part of the project *Breeding Capsicum for Tospo Virus Resistance* (VG02035), which concluded in 2007.

“We identified some resistance in uncultivated germplasm; these were wild species that were totally unsuited for commercial production,” Mr McGrath said.

“However, we identified the resistance and some of the genetics behind it, and we were then able to transfer that resistance into breeding lines of ordinary bell capsicums.”

This led to the project *Breeding Capsicum for Tospovirus Resistance* (VG10081), which allowed Syngenta Seeds to join as co-investors and offer its breeding material to the project.

There were a number of elements to VG10081, including characterising and identifying the tospovirus and conducting surveys to find out where the virus was active. Conventional breeding work was also completed as well as routine glasshouse assessments of the breeding material.

During the project, Syngenta Seeds developed breeding lines (parents) and worked with DAF to identify markers for the resistant gene.

“There was one gene that controls resistance, and a lot of the work in recent times has been directed towards identifying a marker. The purpose of this is to make breeding quicker and simpler, and more efficient,” Mr McGrath said.

“It means that instead of having to physically assess breeding material by seeing which ones are resistant and which ones are susceptible, if you can, by laboratory process, identify the presence of the marker, you know if an individual plant carries resistance. This reduces glasshouse work, which is slower, laborious and painstaking.”

MAJOR FINDINGS

Mr McGrath said the project confirmed that the capsicums identified had a very high level of resistance to capsicum chlorosis virus.

“We’ve been able to transfer that resistance into very good parent lines, which will now form the basis of new F1 hybrids,” he said.

“I think it’s clear now that Syngenta Seeds has some very good breeding material that will result in some hybrids before too long. It’s their ongoing assessment and evaluation, and their commercial decision, but I know that based on this resistance they have quite good material now.”

Mr McGrath said that these findings will offer capsicum growers (particularly those in Queensland) better protection from capsicum chlorosis virus.

CONCLUSION

According to Mr McGrath, the next step is to continue the development of new breeding material in different vegetable commodities.

“This research will allow Syngenta Seeds to put that virus resistance into a broader range of breeding material. It will probably allow additional work to happen in other types of Solanaceae plants like chillies – they’re also susceptible to this virus so there’s obviously scope for ongoing breeding,” he said.

“There will also be continuing genetic work, which is a little bit more theoretical and less applied, but it’s necessary to understand the nature of the resistance and how it can be used in the future.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VG10081 was funded by Hort Innovation (then Horticulture Australia Limited) using the vegetable research and development levy, voluntary contributions from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Syngenta Seeds Australia Limited and contributions from the Australian Government.



THE BOTTOM LINE: TRAINING GROWERS IN DIRECT CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT – SCOPING REPORT (VG16035)

Project VG16035 sought to deliver a detailed program proposal for a series of training opportunities for Australia's vegetable growers to build their marketing knowledge and skills, particularly in social media. The project deliverables included the design of a bespoke 'Direct Consumer Engagement Program' for growers.

The project found that all vegetable growers are likely to possess a level of marketing knowledge. However, it was important to build grower appreciation and knowledge of marketing, as well as demonstrate its practical applications.

It was suggested that the 'Direct Consumer Engagement Program' should be made available in a range of formats (such as printable PDFs, audio and video files) to facilitate usage and maximise grower participation. It was also found that marketing could assist to keep the next generation of young farmers on the land, or lure them back to the farm.

If this program is implemented, Australia's vegetable growers would benefit by gaining a solid understanding of the power of marketing, and the benefits of building a sustainable brand versus simply running a business.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details about the report, 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 'VG16035' on the InfoVeg database: ausveg.com.au/infoveg/infoveg-database.

THE BOTTOM LINE: BREEDING CAPSICUM FOR TOSPOVIRUS RESISTANCE (VG10081)

Project VG10081 aimed to characterise and identify tospovirus affecting capsicums, including tomato spotted wilt virus and capsicum chlorosis virus. The latter is a highly destructive form of tospovirus which causes significant yield losses for capsicum growers, particularly in Queensland.

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) worked with Syngenta Seeds on this project to develop capsicum breeding lines (parents) as well as identifying markers for the resistant gene. The process of identifying the presence of the marker is to make breeding quicker, simpler and more efficient.

The project identified that the capsicum varieties tested showed a very high level of resistance to capsicum chlorosis virus. Syngenta Seeds can use this information to develop its capsicum breeding material, however the outcome will depend on the company's ongoing assessment and evaluation, and commercial decision.

There is further scope to use the results of this project for breeding in other Solanaceae crops such as chillies, which are also susceptible to capsicum chlorosis virus.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details about the research, please contact Denis Persley on 07 3708 8488 or at denis.persley@daf.qld.gov.au.

The final report for this project is available on InfoVeg. Readers can search 'VG10081' on the InfoVeg database: ausveg.com.au/infoveg/infoveg-database.

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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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