

## **Final Report**

# **New Product Development Information for the Vegetable Industry**

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VG14031

**Project:**

New Product Development Information for the Vegetable Industry – VG14031

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## Summary

This project has developed 'best practice' resources for Australian Vegetable Growers to de-risk the process of new product development (NPD) of vegetable and value-added products, such as ready to eat meals, snacks and beverages for domestic and export markets. The project has disseminated the information to growers, with an aim to increase confidence and knowledge to enable more in-house NPD to occur. Over time, this could result in a wider range of vegetable-based products on the market, to increase consumption and develop export opportunities.

There have been 5 major outputs from this project, which was extended via two variation requests:

1. A How-To Guide for developing new value-added vegetable products – printed for workshop participants, and available as a print ready, downloadable pdf online. This was modified for Workshop #2 to incorporate a checklist for new product development, and in response to feedback from Workshop #1 participants.
2. A Resources Guide: a searchable database of Australian companies providing services of relevance to new product development. Details have been added to this, in response to feedback from Workshop participants and the occasional email requesting the inclusion of a specific company.
3. An online portal that hosts all resources including the searchable Resources Guide: [www.veginnovations.com.au](http://www.veginnovations.com.au), accessible from [www.veggycation.com.au](http://www.veggycation.com.au)
4. Workshop #1 (31<sup>st</sup> August 2015) – from which a number of short videos were developed and hosted online.
5. Workshop #2 (March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016) – the planning for which incorporated feedback from participants of Workshop #1.

Based on the results and feedback from the project we have identified that there is a case for ongoing similar stakeholder engagement events. Potential areas of focus for ongoing activity include extending the approach to embrace other sectors (interest from the Australian fruit, nut and mushroom industries has been expressed), provision of more regional events in key producer locations and also more specialised workshops addressing specific technical/market exploitation issues identified by attendees from both the workshops provided under this current project.

## **Keywords**

Innovation; New Product Development; Vegetable; Value Add; Added-value; Food; Snack; Consumer.

## **Introduction**

Horticulture Australia Limited is looking to upskill and support growers to develop new vegetable-based products by providing them with the resources to inform and guide them through the process of new product development (NPD) for domestic and export markets. The ultimate aim is to reduce the risk and cost associated with NPD, and to increase demand for Australian vegetables by increasing the suite of products in which they are used and valued.

This project has developed 'best practice' resources for Australian Vegetable Growers to de-risk the process of new product development (NPD) of vegetable and value-added products such as ready to eat meals, snacks and beverages for domestic and export markets. The project has developed an easy to read 'How-To-Guide' covering all aspects of NPD: including how to scope out potential products and get consumer feedback, hints and tips for working with co-packers and contract manufacturers, protecting your intellectual property, and liaising with NPD teams at the multiple retailers, among many other subjects. A check list for grower companies to work through in preparing internal/external business case documents has also been developed. In addition, a 'Resources Guide' of relevant suppliers of goods and services including packaging suppliers and contract manufacturers plus other useful contacts has been compiled and made available via an on-line portal. The outputs are in print-ready pdf format, and have been presented at two relevant forums. The project aimed to provide information and increase growers' confidence to enable them to undertake more in-house NPD, and to provide a wider range of vegetable-based products to increase consumption and export opportunities.

In addition, the project also provided two one day events for Australian vegetable growers where the best practices developed could be presented in a vibrant and collaborative, commercial environment. Vegetable industry representatives learned not only from key industry leaders, but also from companies operating in fast moving consumer goods sector, about using social media to communicate with customers.

## Methodology

The project brought a very experienced, commercial, international new product development (NPD) team to the project of outlining and de-risking the process of vegetable-based NPD for domestic and export markets. There were three major approaches:

- 1) Document the NPD process (opportunities, risks, steps and resources required) into a 'How to Guide'.
- 2) Develop a 'Resources Guide' by reviewing/listing the companies providing goods and services relevant to NPD for Australian vegetable producers.
- 3) Present the opportunity, best practice and resources.

The methodology required to achieve these aims was determined as follows:

- 1) The 'How to Guide' was written by Dr Hazel MacTavish-West and Jane Milton, a UK based food industry expert. It covered the following topics, among several others:
  - a. Scoping out options for relevant value adding, beverages, snacks (based on new, current and past Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd activities and other work)
  - b. Identifying and assessing ideas and opportunities
  - c. Consumer insights and interpretation
  - d. Developing product concepts - creatives
  - e. Branding, co-branding & marketing
  - f. Protecting and managing intellectual property – yours and theirs
  - g. Labelling, claims and product positioning
  - h. Product development – prototypes
  - i. Product analysis
  - j. Sensory and shelf-life
  - k. Packaging options
  - l. Packaging design
  - m. Co-packers
  - n. Product manufacture – contract

- o. Product manufacture – in-house (including CAPEX and costings)
- p. Resourcing the NPD process – cash and skills
- q. Managing the NPD and production flow in-house (software tools etc.)
- r. Managing an external production chain
- s. Distribution logistics incl web
- t. Selling to Buyers
- u. Export Opportunities
- v. Product ranging, and improvements
- w. Public relations & consumer communications (digital).

A survey was undertaken by around 40 UK and Australian companies successful at vegetable-based NPD, also retailers and consultants, and asking them for tips and approaches they used. Snippets from these surveys were interspersed among the text to make it real. It is one thing having a document to read about 'how to innovate' – even if this is focused on best practice and not purely theory. We also know there is nothing like hearing advice from the horse's mouth, from people who have used their own money and tried, failed, learned, tried again and succeeded.

The How-To Guide was styled to make it easy to read, understanding that growers are busy people, who may want to dip in and out, reading about a specific topic at one time, and another at another time. The style and layout was intended to be light hearted. Feedback on Version #1 was obtained from AUSVEG, Hort. Innovation Australia and attendees of Workshop #1 by online survey, and this was incorporated into the final document available online and presented at Workshop #2. In addition, a checklist for growers undertaking NPD was added.

2) The 'Resources Guide' was compiled by reviewing/listing the companies providing goods and services relevant to NPD for Australian vegetable producers. This includes listing (company contacts, websites, key activities) and, in some cases, a review of the offer from Australian and other relevant overseas companies whom undertake:

- a. Creative product development
- b. Contract manufacture (processing) and packing
- c. Packaging supply and design
- d. Branding, marketing & design
- e. Intellectual Property protection
- f. Analysis (nutritional, sensory, shelf-life)
- g. Digital and media communications



h. etc.

There are 220 companies and service providers listed in the Resource Guide covering all states, and the details are searchable by type of provider, by state, or by company name.

3) The best practice 'How to Guide' and key learnings, and the Resources Guide were presented in a dynamic way at two relevant industry events, in conjunction with AUSVEG and Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd.

The initial workshop held on the 31st of August, 2015, was targeted at managers and staff charged with technical research and development, marketing, business development, sales and marketing within vegetable production, processing and marketing companies. Attendees had to be vegetable R&D levy payers, and attendee numbers were limited to 45. The benefits of attending were defined as: Hear, see, touch, taste and learn about:

- Finding and developing concepts
- Meeting consumer needs
- Making unique products, that are valued
- Getting packaging and presentation right
- Effective marketing
- Working with retailers
- Making great export products
- Available resources and support
- Businesses that can help
- Real-life stories of success (and failure)

The approach adopted for the workshop was to utilise expert presentations, which were also captured on video. The workshop was facilitated by the project leads (Dr Hazel MacTavish-West and Jane Milton: an international food industry expert who could provide insights around successful social marketing, working with food suppliers to most UK supermarkets and her experience of developing food businesses supported by UK Dragon's Den 'Dragon' Deborah Meaden). Other speakers included representatives from Mondeléz, the Mondeléz Food Innovation Centre, an advisor to national retailers, a consumer/sales data supplier and successful vegetable marketing companies. Speakers provided innovative, pertinent and insightful information in interactive, workshop-style presentations. All presentations were professionally filmed, with video footage edited subsequently and uploaded to Vimeo, to be seen by the whole of industry at will.

An innovative, relevant venue was selected: The workshop was held at, and co-sponsored by the Mondeléz Food Innovation Centre in Melbourne. The Food Innovation Centre is focused on the survival and renewal of the Australian food manufacturing sector. The Food Innovation Centre is a one-stop shop that has world class innovation capabilities, facilities and expertise that can support small and medium businesses in the food industry.

Attendee evaluation was performed through the use of a short paper questionnaire completed on the day before leaving which evaluated motivations for attending, perceptions of the value of the messages provided, feedback on the effectiveness of the event and what aspects they felt could be explored further. The responses were then used to inform the second workshop provided under a further project extension (see Evaluation and Discussion section for further details).

The second workshop was held in March 18, 2016 at the same venue, and with a similar brief to the first workshop, sharing some common speakers but also including some new messages based on feedback from the first workshop. The second workshop was not filmed. To allow comparative analysis, the second workshop was evaluated using a similar questionnaire to the first workshop.

Online resources generated have been monitored using download counters and website traffic analytics (e.g. google analytics) where appropriate to assess stakeholder usage.

## Outputs

There have been 5 major outputs from this project, which was extended via two variation requests:

1. **A How-To Guide** for developing new value-added vegetable products – printed for workshop participants, and available as a print ready downloadable pdf online. The guide was authored by Hazel MacTavish-West and Jane Milton and is produced as a graphically intensive, informally presented series of stand-alone chapters considering various aspects of the development of new, innovative vegetable products. The guide was specifically not written as a traditional text book requiring study but rather as a highly accessible resource that could be read by growers and producers at leisure. This was modified for Workshop #2 as a result of feedback from Workshop #1 participants, Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd. staff and AUSVEG staff – principally addition of a checklist for new product development, improvement of technical information on food safety. A number of copies of the revised Guide were supplied to Hort. Innovation Australia staff at the event, and we have 65 copies in-hand. The Guide can be downloaded in whole, or as separate chapters at <http://www.veginnovations.com.au/VegInnovationsDownloads.html>
2. **A Resources Guide:** a searchable database of Australian companies providing services of relevance to new product development. This has been added to in response to feedback from Workshop participants and the occasional email requesting inclusion of a specific company. The guide is available as either a stand-alone spreadsheet file for download or as a searchable web tool based on a MySQL database accessed via a php scripted website. The database used for the resource guide tool is generated from the spreadsheet using administrative tools also using php scripts.
3. **An online portal** that hosts all resources including the searchable Resources Guide: [www.veginnovations.com.au](http://www.veginnovations.com.au), accessible from [www.veggycation.com.au](http://www.veggycation.com.au)
4. **Workshop #1** (31st August 2015) held at the Mondeléz Food Innovation Centre, Melbourne. In addition to the live workshop a number of short videos from the day were produced and hosted online through the web portal in output #4. These videos, a combination of excerpts from the presentations and interviews with the speakers, allow interested parties who could not attend the event in person to share in the knowledge imparted.
5. **Workshop #2** (March 18th 2016) held at the Mondeléz Food Innovation Centre, Melbourne – the planning for which incorporated feedback from participants of Workshop #1.

## Outcomes

Feedback received as a result of the two workshops (see Evaluation and Discussion section) have indicated a high degree of engagement from many attendees. Conversion of this engagement to specific product developments would be hard to evaluate in the long term but through the combination of printed, online and face-to-face resources provided by this project, an increase in the level of enthusiasm for exploring new development opportunities and a better understanding of issues and where to go for further help has been indicated. This engagement is also evidenced through responses from the second workshop where a number of attendees indicated that they were referred by attendees of the first workshop. If industry perceived no benefit from the activities these referrals would not be made.

PMA-ANZ: Dr Angeline Achariya has been invited to speak at the upcoming PMA conference on “Fast-track your innovations for sustained growth” – she will highlight this project in one of the slides. We have a number (about 65 copies) of the How-To guides left over from the last print run; copies could be made available at this event and at the AUSVEG convention.

## Evaluation and Discussion

At both workshop events, participants were issued with feedback questionnaires which provided the main 'formal' mechanism for stakeholder feedback and comment. Evaluation of these responses is detailed below.

### **Feedback from the Workshop #1:**

Responses: Feedback was received from 37 of almost 40 attendees.

**Contact:** 42% heard about the event by email, 20% by HIA article, 14% by twitter, and 36% by other means – colleagues, personal contact, or a brochure at AUSVEG.

**Speakers:** People were particularly enthused/inspired by Susie White, Jane Milton, Tristan Kitchener, & Martin Kneebone. People found market insight, and strategic market relationship information particularly interesting, and the idea brainstorming techniques very stimulating. Many felt they already had a handle on the IP and GS1 info – although others mentioned this as being of interest.

Many people commented that all speakers were informative, and the combination worked well:

- "All provided a good balance of insights for the days agenda."
- "Lots of variety in speakers. Kept their topics interesting and short."
- "Picked up some points from all speakers."
- "It was good to see and learn how to think outside the box"
- "All gave something to think about"
- "All very informative"
- "I was in awe of all presentations."

Susie Whites specific comments included:

- "need at least 1/2 or full day on this. Would be great to expand on her ideas - conducting brainstorming with a team."
- "moving peeps from critical thinking to creative thinking is tough!"
- "10/10 engaging - produced something in my head."
- "Vibrant and crowd participation"
- "Great start: needed the thinking refresh and reframing for the day"

Tristan Kitcheners specific comments included:

- “for the insight into the current retail environment especially around the supermarket price wars.”
- “10/10 - informative, clear information on supermarket was appreciated. ”
- “some great info to help understand the sector better.”
- “Understanding the retailer - where are they coming from, how we can better support the relationship.”
- “spoke quite quickly, would like to hear him again though”

Martin Kneebones specific comments included:

- “my business can grow from his presentation.”

Hazel MacTavish-West and Jane Miltons specific comments included:

- “Jane: 10/10: insights into consumer trends are \$\$\$”
- “Hazel and Jane: both inspiring.”
- “Please invite me to another Jane & Hazel forum”
- “Hazel: Interested in her vocational field and experiences.

Other comments:

- “Social media discussions were very useful”

**Most valuable aspect of the workshop:**

General comments – text analysis (larger, bolder text was repeated more often by respondents):

Workshop Organised Trends Expertise Idea  
Seeing Networking Wide Range of  
Topics Industry Supermarkets

# Understanding Happening Contacts

## **Specific comments:**

- "Thanks very much - a very inspiring and useful day."
- "One of the best organised workshops I have been to."
- "Coming to the FIC was a great idea - I had no idea this was here! Networking great - need more people here. Well done guys, I could have listened for another day!"
- "Exposure to experienced people in their field. Brilliant. Best amalgamation of industry experienced speakers I've sat in front of."
- "Wide range of topics covered well by each speaker. I thought it was one of the best I have been to."
- "Wide range of topics and expertise, small groups and good networking. really well organised and excellent speakers."
- "Hearing about global trends/data on retail/consumer/sales trends etc. Fantastic workshop - thank you."
- "Good overview of the industry and opportunities. Great day, powerful insights. great value-add publication."
- "Big picture: packed a lot in a limited time period which was a good thing. Cannot wait to bring the team back for a project. Well balanced."
- "Speaker's passion, knowledge, enthusiasm, and innovative interest in the Ag industry. Glad it was a HIA/AUSVEG/Hazel collaboration - we HORT need more of this for the new generation farmers."
- "The enthusiasm for innovation, loved the beet crisps, the interaction with other attendees, moving attendees around was an excellent idea."

## **Least valuable aspect of the workshop:**

- People already felt they knew about IP and GS1 barcodes.
- The fact that Asia Fruit Logistica is this week too (1 person said this).

**Workshop organisation:** 61% of respondents rated this as excellent (score 5), 39% as score 4.

## **Improvements mentioned included:**

- more/longer breaks and more time for speakers (7 people mentioned this), or 1 less speaker
- more opportunity for interaction (5 people mentioned this)

- more vegetables at lunch (2 people mentioned this)
- two people mentioned venue- specific issues: sitting with backs to speaker, and small screen.

**Specific comments:**

- "Potential for additional audience participation. additional focus on design of a Value-added product. Commodity specific."
- "Seating configuration - please don't sit people with their backs to a screen. Screen too small."
- "Maybe add more industry examples."
- "Its hard to listen to speakers talk all day. Sometimes more interaction is needed to break it up."
- "extend to 2 days"
- "Speakers not to be so rushed, more opportunity for questions, use of a facilitated panel."
- "Very well run, especially keeping speakers to their times limit. food really good."

**Overall quality:** 44% rated as Score 5, (Excellent), 53% rated as Score 4, and 3% as Score 3.

**Overall usefulness:** 31% rated as Score 5 (Very Useful), 56% rated as Score 4, and 14% as Score 3.



**Summary:** Feedback from Workshop #1 made it clear that the speakers on idea creation, consumer and market trends, innovating with vegetables, and the tour of the Food Innovation Centre were valued more than presentations on Intellectual Property, GS1 barcodes and exporting to Japan. Participants felt the speakers did not have enough time each, and that there was not sufficient time for networking. There were also a few suggestions for ways the venue layout and food could have been improved. Participants were impressed with the Food Innovation Centre, and several have gone on to work with Dr Angeline Achariya and her team.

Feedback from workshop #1 was used to improve Workshop #2:

- We incorporated the most popular speakers plus a new speaker on social media (and thus had 3 less speakers); topics were some of those identified as priority for future events at Workshop #1, which were, in priority order:
  1. Coming up with great ideas
  2. How to get the most from website and social media
  3. Packaging innovations
  4. Interrogating sales data
  5. Food safety, shelf-life and sensory assessments
  6. Getting free publicity
- Each speaker was given 45 minutes (instead of 30)
- There was more time built into the day for tours of the Virtual Supermarket Theatre and the 3D Prototyping Packaging Design Centre at the Food Innovation Centre, and networking.
- Susie White was involved in sessions throughout the day to get participants thinking about the implications for their businesses from the information presented, and to develop a summary of the day at the end.
- The layout of the room was changed to ensure people were able to see the screen better (there are some physical limitations to the room layout which are unchangeable).
- The food included more fresh fruit and vegetable offerings (yoghurt with fruit, vegetable crudité, fruit salad, salads and protein options – meatballs, chicken and falafel), and less bread-based dishes.

**The final programme for Workshop #2 is presented below:**

8.30-9.00am: Registration, Refreshments, Networking.

9.00-9.15am: Introduction to the day, the Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd. project and the available resources. Hazel MacTavish-West.

9.15–10.15am: Fast, Fresh & Fun: How to Create New Ideas. Susie White, Innovation Director, The Ideas Catalyst.

10.15-11.00am: How failing fast can help your product to succeed and introduction to the Food Innovation Centre. Angeline Achariya, Food Innovation Centre.

11.00-11.45am: Food Innovation Centre Tour Groups\* A and B; Refreshments and Networking.

11.45-12.15pm: Innovating with vegetables; simple steps to add value. Hazel MacTavish-West, MacTavish West P/L.

12.15-1.00pm: What do consumers value; how to predict potential new winners. Martin Kneebone, FreshLogic P/L.

1.00-1.45pm: Lunch & Networking.

1.45–2.30pm: The changing retail landscape and creating value for suppliers and retailers. Tristan Kitchener, Kitchener Partners.

2.30-3.15pm: How a Sports Nutrition Company uses social marketing to create value and drive sales – a Case Study. Brodie West, Bulk Nutrients.

3.15-4.00pm: Food Innovation Centre Tour Groups\* C and D; Refreshments and Networking

4.15pm: Close. \*Attendees were divided into 4 small groups to tour the Food Innovation Centre: the Virtual Supermarket Theatre and the 3D Prototyping Packaging Design Centre.

**Workshop Attendees:** Around 40 people attended the workshop, with several from companies involved in the vegetable supply chain (seed breeders, packaging) or working for companies who use vegetables to develop added value products (dip manufacturers, chefs). The attendee list was shared with Horticulture Innovation Australia staff prior to the event.

Advertising the workshop was via articles in the Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd. magazine, and AUSVEG weekly email bulletins. Due to the fact that editions of relevant magazines were not appropriately timed for promotion, we spent considerably more time than initially intended using email to our extensive database of growers and industry players, and Twitter to contact potential attendees, sending out daily tweets covering links to videos from Workshop #1, links to speakers, pictures of new added-value vegetable products and feedback from previous participants. Our tweets were re-tweeted by previous attendees and speakers quite widely.

41% of attendees heard about the event by email, 6% by Twitter, 15% as a result of the Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd. article, and 50% via 'other means' such as from a colleague, via the AUSVEG email, field extension officers, vegetables WA representative, previous attendees, and Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd. staff.

## Feedback from Workshop #2

Feedback forms were received from 36 people at the end of the day. In addition, unsolicited email feedback has also been received:

- "Hello Hazel, Just wanted to thank you for a really fantastic workshop. I thought the content and the speakers were great. I got a lot out of the technical side, but also made some new contacts which is also wonderful. Thanks and regards". Aaron Natoli, Manager of Operations, Natoli Produce Farms.
- "I found the workshop extremely informative, engaging and motivating even after the nearly 3 hour train ride in the morning. It feels the workshop happened just yesterday and the discussions are so fresh in my mind. It was also great to meet up with other esteemed personnel from the Fruit and Vegetable industry and network. I did really get the opportunity to get to know a lot of the participants, however, with time limitations I could not touch base with others. However, I did exchange a quick hello's with most." Salesni Devi, Product Development Technologist, Primo Moraitis Fresh Pty. Ltd.
- "I just wanted to thank and commend you and your team for the day, I found it very informative and it opened my eyes to areas of the vegetable industry I've not given thought to before and I made a few useful contacts. Thanks again." Scott Matthies.

**Speakers:** We asked people to rate each speaker on usefulness of their talk, using a score of 1 to 4 where 1 is not very useful, and 4 is extremely useful. Specific comments about each speaker are summarised below:

Susie White's presentation: weighted average was 3.68 (all responses rating as either 3 or 4)

- Approaches to innovation, idea expression and reception strategies. The ideas catalyst was great session.
- Very interesting and engaging- generating ideas and turning into possible products
- Everyone is creative- don't be scared to have a go
- Inspiring, enjoyed creative space ideas

Susie White's break sessions, getting people to write down how they were going to use this information in their businesses averaged 3.21 (with 89% rating them as either 3 or 4)

- Helps reinforce how the things we have learnt can be applied day to day in our business
- Sharing different perspective, partner to increase ideas
- Good refresher
- Not needed
- Fun and good way to network

Angeline Achariya's talk averaged 3.37 (with 86% of responses rating as either 3 or 4)

- Fail fast great for decision making
- Loved the focus on prototyping and developing packaging and drivers prior to recipes
- Failing fast is a good thing, looking into Asia, we can use the FIC
- Loved the tour of the site
- Found it went into too much detail. Knowledge mapping

Hazel MacTavish-West's talk averaged 3.63 (with all responses rating as either 3 or 4)

- Importance of communication. Getting a story/message out there. Value adding products gave insight/ideas for new product development, e.g. vegetarian based meal alternatives instead of meat
- Learning the term flexitarian! Also extraction, bio-refining concept. All good-favourite talk for me content wise
- If you're a vege producer, you are a health food producer
- Use clean labels, visibly see a difference
- Communication is paramount to convey benefits of veggies

Martin Kneebone's talk averaged 3.57 (all responses rated as either 3 or 4)

- Excellent insight
- Total market picture
- Martin's talk was great and gave me much thought about food waste- The Barossa Add is very similar to the 'True Blood' intro
- It was full of discrete analytics and comparatives about vegetable marketing
- Learning about shopper behaviour mon-thurs vs weekend
- Provenance tips and practical ways to push business

Tristan Kitchener's talk averaged 3.51 (94% of responses rated 3 or 4)

- Scary!
- I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the talk. Very detailed and back up by data. Great powerpoint slides
- Great explanation of the retail market, it's drivers and operation
- Interesting but soul destroying from industry perspective, brought the energy of the room down

- Learning about the drivers of the retailers and the perception of choice as range is reduced
- Scary but great insight into UK and Aus landscape

Brodie West's talk averaged 2.45 (52% of responses rated as 3 or 4)

- Not quite the same standard as the others, still good
- Interesting insight to growing an innovative business
- Content as distribution is key for social media
- Good to hear about how successful a small business can grow
- Too many videos, too focussed into social media
- Great success but would have liked closer to the food/veg industry
- Very interesting learning about google analytics and click through trading

All talks were well received, with scores of 3 and 4, with scores for Brodie West being lower. Brodie had been asked to focus on the way their direct-to-consumer company uses social media to drive sales. I think several participants couldn't see the connection with vegetables (there wasn't one – at the previous workshop the social marketing had been about chocolate), and Brodie himself was obviously not used to public speaking in this sort of forum.

The tour of the Food Innovation Centre averaged 3.35 (90% rated as 3 or 4)

- The fact that these facilities are available to such a wide group of customers
- Eye opener of the capabilities of the centre and scope for new product development and understanding your target market
- Interesting, however too long
- Virtual supermarket was awesome and the 3D printing very beneficial to see/learn about
- Love the design centre and the designers knowledge. Not useful was a beverage sample. Would have preferred vege packing sample
- Fantastic! Great to know what resources are available to businesses

**Overall quality and style** was averaged at 3.62 (all responses rated 3 or 4)

**Most valuable aspects were:**

Products Thinking Networking Tristan's  
Presentation Growers Value Speakers  
Meeting Ideas Understanding Opportunity Susie

**Specific comments:**

- Great variety of speakers all very relevant
- All aspects were great as each presenter addressed a different but equally important topic in food business. The best was the role of the FIC since my business can look into this further to develop ideas/commercialisation effectively
- Very informative. New opportunity, development, creative thinking process
- Susie and Martin's talk very interesting and enjoyable
- Hazel's talk. It was very relevant as a vegetable grower. Talking to other growers
- Opened to new ideas. Value added product. Meeting growers from all over Australia
- Opportunity to hear range of speakers on different aspects. This was thought provoking
- I got lots out of all the speakers and will leave today very excited and enthusiastic for the future
- Opportunity to think about work outside of the workspace with good stimulus

**Least valuable aspect responses:** Some attendees did not connect well with Brodie's talk and the subject of social media marketing (positive or negative responses were highly dependent on the attendee's role and experience).

- Last presentation by Brodie, too lengthy and unnecessary repeated details. Powerpoint slides were unprofessional.
- Limited time for discussion
- Brodie's presentation on social marketing:- interesting but not applicable to my role as a product developer.
- Supermarket spiel:- lots of assumed knowledge in a speech which has been "well worn"

- Tour of the centre. Brodie's talk too long, too many blogs, not necessary.

**Event Organisation** was rated as 3.62 average with all received responses 3 or 4

Aspects commented on that could be improved included:

- Having all presentations relevant to key topics
- Engage attendees more. Perhaps get people to introduce themselves
- Less detail in slideshows and more interaction
- Ensuring room temperature is moderated
- More time
- Sound quality
- Things seemed rushed

These were generally one-off comments with no obvious significant trend for issues.

We asked what **other information was required** to help assist with developing new food products:

Packaging Products Trends Export Market Food

This suggests to us that there could be a place for specific workshops on single topics – around packaging, market and food trends, and the export opportunity.

**Other comments:**

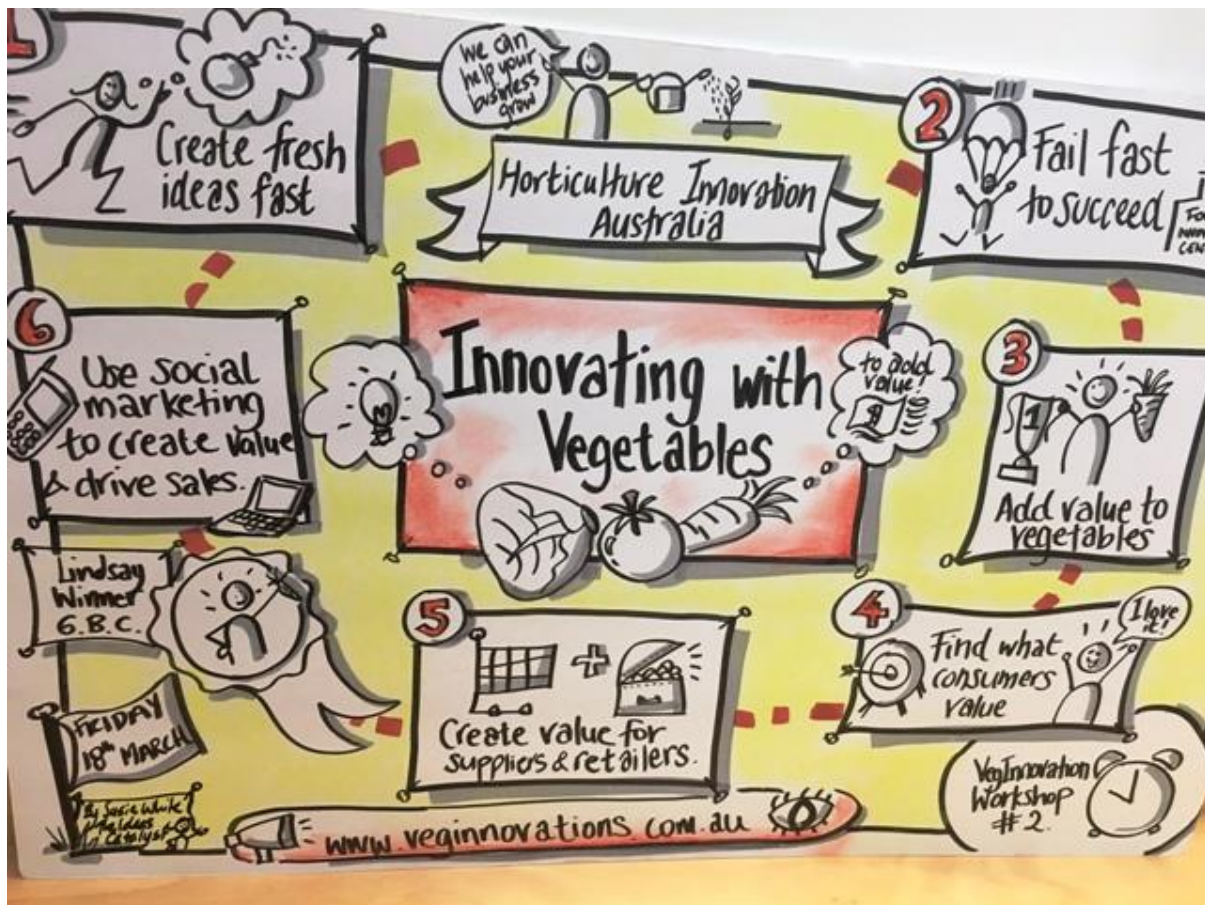
- Thought it was fab. Food and catering brilliant
- Worked really well
- Great day, interesting speakers, great networking opportunities
- Gun-Bunny-Carrot Rocks
- Loved the passion and knowledge from the organisers, Thanks
- Fantastic day, the best workshop I have been to in a long time! Very relevant, informative, well organised, good level/balance of speakers and networking. Thank you!!!
- Had a great day. It was all very interesting, only negatives would be the layout of the conference room but as you are moving it is not worth mentioning.



Attendees at Workshop #2

Gun, Bunny, Carrot!

Summary: Prepared by Susie White:



It appears that the sessions run by Susie White getting people to move around ('Gun, Bunny, Carrot') or think about their businesses were well received, and it's nice to have a visual summary to take away.

Comparing the feedback from workshop 1 and 2 indicates that it appears structural changes made to the second workshop successfully addressed some concerns from the first workshop related to the pace of the day and other organisational comments.



## **Our Learnings for Future Events:**

**Fun and games:** The 'Gun, Bunny, Carrot' game Susie White ran was well received, and worked very well in the room with that amount of people. In addition, the sessions she ran at the end of each 2 talks were useful for participants to think about ramifications for their businesses, and the summary she did at the end was worth the effort, we think.

**Food & Venue:** Getting the food right was worth the effort – people were very appreciative of the catering – especially the fresh veggies! The air conditioning was a bit variable during the day, and we responded to feedback, but there was a lag in the thermal change.

**Timings:** We were very surprised everyone was there so early, given a) the weather and b) the Grand Prix being on. We didn't feel we could start earlier, however, as there were still 6-10 people unaccounted for by 8.30am. We thought the timings worked pretty well on the day, and were glad to see so many people sitting around at the end, chatting about their businesses.

**Speakers:** We obviously needed to introduce the reasons we had asked each speaker to speak to, in more detail – so people had the relevant scene setting. We will do more of this, in future. Also, from now on, unless we have personally witnessed a specific person make a presentation, we are not going to book them to present at an event, even if they have a fabulous reputation!

We were disappointed that some paid speakers did not arrive until just before their talk, had not thoroughly checked their presentations for formatting glitches (often happens between Mac/PC conversions), and left shortly after their talk – not being available for discussions etc. later in the day. We will try and avoid this happening in future events.

**Registrations:** The online registration portal EventBrite was easy to use and seemed to work well. In Workshop #1 it was made clear that seats were limited, and we were fully booked a few weeks prior to the event, with only one person not turning up on the day. Workshop #2 was originally going to be held at a larger venue (the new Food Innovation Centre venue at Monash University), thus we didn't push the seat limitation aspect quite so much. We had around 5 people pull out in the last few days. Our learnings for the future would be to strongly recommend a catering deposit or similar (\$30-\$50 per person) being taken, to help secure the seat.

**Usage Statistics:** Since going 'live' in November 2015 a number of statistics have been collected regarding the usage of the online portal and the resources downloaded. These statistics are:

- a) **Website** [www.vegginnovations.com.au](http://www.vegginnovations.com.au) is where all the resources are hosted. People have predominantly been asked to access this via [www.veggycation.com.au](http://www.veggycation.com.au). The website has typically been hosting 300+ sessions a month with around 500 page views. February was slower (possibly due to summer holidays) with fewer visitors but those who did visit seemed to look at more pages.
- b) **How-To Guide** – this has been downloaded in its entirety over 70 times. Individual chapters have each been downloaded around 30 times.
- c) **Resource Guide** – this has been accessed, and some information downloaded 90 times.
- d) **Videos** – have been viewed around 250 times in total.

The level of publicity that the website has received remains quite low, it being limited to referral as part of the workshop activities and a link from [www.veggycation.com.au](http://www.veggycation.com.au) created under VG12043, Conveying Health Benefits of Australian Vegetables. The level of site activity is in line with expectations based on this fact. Further promotion could be used to increase traffic levels.

## Recommendations

**Other Horticultural Sectors:** We had a number of enquiries and registrations (>15) from fruit producers and marketers to attend – when faced with a \$450 + GST invoice they backed off. We have previously had interest from nut and mushroom producers too. It demonstrates there is interest in a broader topic base for innovation and value-adding in fresh produce. **Suggestion:** We could run a combined fresh produce innovation workshop with support from the relevant sectors. This may work best as a state-based activity, run centrally (i.e. Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide), but could also be regional – see below.

**Regional Workshops:** Via email, telephone and at other events, groups such as Vegetables WA, Bundaberg Growers and growers in the Lockyer Valley have expressed interest in hosting an event specific to their region – which would be more accessible to busy growers by being closer to home. **Suggestion:** These could be run in a slightly different format, to enable specific grower groups to work on issues of relevance to them. For example, we could cover a number of short, sharp overviews via presentations: market trends, technical issues, packaging, branding, social media. Then, split into two concurrent workshop-style sessions (one could even have two of these concurrent sessions in one day, thus getting through 4 topics), where groups work through issues of relevance to them, using their examples. Topics could include:

- idea creation
- packaging for export
- presenting to buyers
- how to promote your produce
- using direct to consumer sales channels

**Specific Workshops:** Invariably some people want to spend longer on one topic and are not interested in others. We have seen excellent feedback from topics around idea creation, market trends and food trends, and we know that there is a lot of interest in getting products and packaging ready for export to specific countries such as Japan, and China. **Suggestion:** It may be that a series of specific workshops addressing these topics could be developed and undertaken – by bringing in 1 specialist for each workshop, and building a few more general pieces of information around the edge. Prior to the event participants would respond to questions from the organiser on topics they wanted to cover and issues of importance to them, and may be given some pre-work to develop. The workshop would then address and respond to this, and the aim would be for participants to go away with specific answers and direction for their businesses. These workshops may work best with just 12-15 people.

**Ongoing website support:** [www.veginnovations.com.au](http://www.veginnovations.com.au) is the portal currently used to host the various resources and downloads. Initial maintenance is provided under the terms of VG14031. However, ongoing registration, hosting and maintenance of the site after the initial year is currently unresourced.

## **Scientific Refereed Publications**

None to report.

## **Intellectual Property/Commercialisation**

No commercial IP generated.

# References

None to report.

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