

vegetables australia

July/August 2006

RRP: \$6.00 + GST

ISSN: 1832-3340

volume

2.1

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A photograph of two men in a vegetable field. The man on the left is wearing a dark blue polo shirt and is looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing a blue button-down shirt and is smiling. They are both crouching in a field of large green leafy vegetables.

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Printer

Erwins Printing Pty Ltd

Distribution

Dynamic Direct

READERSHIP: 9500

Thank you to all growers and researchers for your participation in the interviews.

Published by:

AUSVEG



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All research and development projects are facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG and are funded by the National Vegetable Levy and/or voluntary contributions from industry. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities.

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Vegetables Australia is produced by AUSVEG Ltd and is free for all National Vegetable Levy payers.

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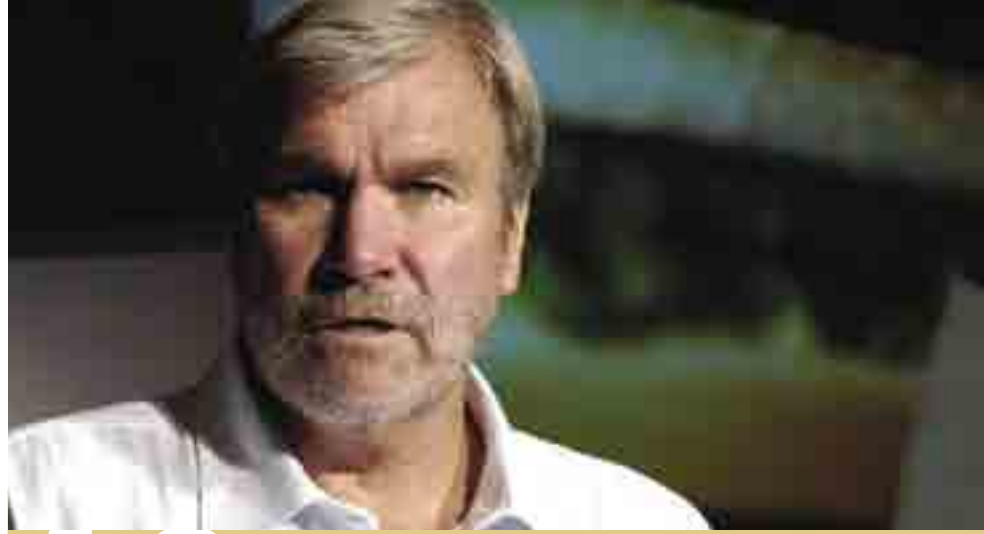
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ISSN 1832-3340

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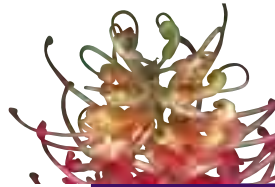
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A word from the AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

What a busy few months it has been for our industry, an inaugural National Vegetable Industry Conference, a new product 'Australian grown' line of packaged vegetables from Coles, and the release of a draft copy of the new industry strategic plan 'VegVision 2020', all of which are welcome good news for our industry.

Over the last year we've discussed many challenges facing the Australian vegetable industry. The conference presented an opportunity for us to come together as an industry and talk about how we can confront our problems and to learn from those who are succeeding in these difficult times.

There are some brilliant people working in this industry, people who are embracing change and continually innovating their

businesses and product, not to forget the great things coming out of the Australian National Vegetable Levy program which is continually returning on our investment in innovation.

The conference brought people together and we need the same thing to happen under the industry strategic plan, 'VegVision 2020'. If we can bring the innovators together and consolidate our industry under 'VegVision

2020' then there's a good chance that we can step forward together into new opportunities and a viable future.

Michael Badcock
AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

From the Editor



What a fascinating time to be involved in the vegetable industry! Following the resounding success of the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane, many exciting changes are in the pipeline for the industry as a whole.

With the industry ready to launch its strategic plan, VegVision 2020 (outlined on page 8), and a wealth of discussion and debate rising out of the conference, there is plenty for growers to think about. Read about some of the conference outcomes (pages 10-14), including an exciting new announcement made by Coles Supermarkets.

Aside from conference news, in this issue we explore the rising popularity of organics as a viable avenue for vegetable growers. As consumers become more concerned with their health, we talk to growers who

have undertaken organic farming to meet growing market demand. We look at how the new workplace relations reforms affect farming businesses, as well as providing an overview of some of the latest research being conducted around the country. We also bring you the latest news and events from each of the states.

One thing is certain – there has never been a better time to be part of this vibrant, progressive industry.

Youna Angevin-Castro
Editor, Vegetables Australia

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Industry prepares to launch

vegvision 2020



The Australian vegetable industry is preparing to launch its strategic plan VegVision 2020, a blueprint for the long term viability and sustainability of vegetable production in Australia.

In February of this year, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, formed the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group (AVIDG) to oversee the development of the strategic plan, and to ensure that a series of foundation projects established under the Industry Partnership Program deliver results according

to industry expectation.

Fundamental to VegVision 2020 is an understanding of the purpose of the vegetable industry within the broader Australian landscape. As a food industry, the vegetable industry plays a significant role in not only satisfying the needs of the consumer, but also contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of Australians.

Integral to the success of the vision is the need to recognise the importance of consumer behaviour and how to implement change across the whole supply chain in order to increase Australian vegetable consumption.

"A whole-of-industry approach is critical to the success of this strategy," Richard Bovill, Chair of the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group said.

"In a consumer-dominated market such as Australia, success is governed by an understanding of what values motivate people to buy Australian grown products. However, without the co-operation of retailers and

food service industries, there is little means by which growers can understand these consumer needs and expectations."

While global competitiveness remains a major pressure on the industry, the plan identifies a number of opportunities for the Australian industry, both locally and internationally. These form a set of strategic imperatives, which include:

- Delivering to the changing needs and demands of consumers.
- Recognising markets, both locally and internationally, for a reliable supply of safe, quality products.
- Recognising the need for innovation in creating new products and supply chain solutions.
- Achieving internationally competitive vegetable production and supply chains.
- Developing advanced industry information and communication channels to meet the needs of the future.
- Providing visionary leadership through robust and effective industry structures, policy and regulatory frameworks.

Underlying each of these strategic imperatives is the need for a strategy, incorporating all aspects of the supply chain, and ultimately targeted at achieving consumer awareness.

"We have a marvelous industry, with a huge amount of goodwill and a very clean operating environment. And out of this, the plan seeks opportunities for the future.

The vision, compiled after months of industry consultation across the entire supply chain, is underpinned by a general shift in focus from the paddock to the consumer, with the aim of leading the Australian vegetable industry to a more profitable future.

VegVision 2020 states that by 2020, the Australian vegetable industry aims "to double the 2006 value of fresh, processed and packaged vegetables in real terms by stimulating and meeting consumer preference for Australian products in domestic and global markets."

The Australian vegetable industry made great strides in 2005, taking responsibility for its own destiny and creating a pathway for its future profitability and sustainability. This commenced with the AUSVEG crisis meeting and the Fair Dinkum Food Campaign in 2005, along with the establishment of an Australian Vegetable Industry Partnership between AUSVEG and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.



vegvision 2020

“To double the 2006 value of fresh, processed and packaged vegetables in real terms by stimulating and meeting consumer preference for Australian products in domestic and global markets.”

“What has come out of the strategy development process is the need for cooperation and collaboration – a need for everyone to work together and understand that these issues are the issues of a whole industry, and the communities that depend on them.

“VegVision 2020 does not turn its back on the fact that we need to be a competitive industry, but it does recognise the need to focus on where the industry wants to be, how we will get there, and why we will succeed.” ■

VegVision 2020 outlines what the vegetable industry should be doing to succeed in future markets. To do this, the industry must recognise the following:

- Consumers are demanding more, they want increases in product quality and value for money.
- Australian products must be recognised for their high quality, safety, innovation and availability.
- The Australian vegetable industry must be competitive in production and supply on a global scale.
- Advances in industry information and the methods in which it is communicated, will be a key to our success. Systems must be put in place to meet future needs.
- Industry policies, vision, institutions and leadership must be pro-active and evolve as change occurs.

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National conference declared

The 2006 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane received rave reviews from the 501 delegates and the 32 trade show exhibitors. Stephen Zelez reports.

Growers, industry stakeholders and research providers participated in the nationally focused Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, held in Brisbane in May.

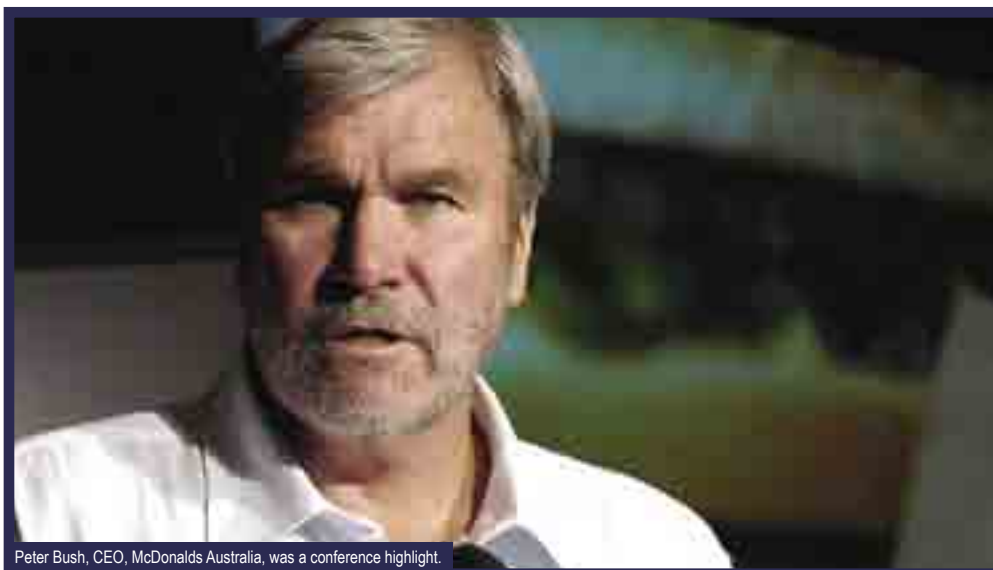
“This was a really well run conference, interesting, enlightening, scary and informative. I hope that this is the turning point for the industry moving forward.” – TAS grower.

The conference provided an opportunity for the vegetable industry to come together and talk about the industry’s future. Representation from all sectors of industry and from all parts of Australia contributed to the feel of the conference and the success of the event.

Business innovation, successful case studies, industry change and consolidation formed the broader context for the conference.

The first day of the conference closely examined the current state of the vegetable industry, and debated what can be done into the future to ensure its long term viability.

Richard Bovill, Chair of the recently formed Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group, launched the industry’s strategic plan ‘VegVision 2020’. Developed following 12 months of industry consultation, VegVision 2020 is a flow-on from the Australian government’s Industry Partnership with the Australian vegetable



Peter Bush, CEO, McDonalds Australia, was a conference highlight.

industry and lays the foundation for the way forward.

Supply chain representatives from Coles, Woolworths and McDonalds engaged and challenged growers at to innovate their businesses and products. The line-up of speakers included Peter Bush, CEO, McDonalds Australia, Cameron Trainor, General Manager Fresh Merchandise, Coles Supermarkets and Stephen Bate, General Manager Fresh Food, Woolworths.

“A great balance between networking, informing and consulting.” – Sponsor.

Peter Bush’s presentation at the conference was noted as a highlight by many of the growers who took away a wealth

of insight into reviving a business to meet consumer demand.

Grower feedback from post-event analysis identified this particular session as being the most popular session at the conference.

Innovation and the industry’s investment in research and development took centre stage during the second day of the conference with vegetable commodity and issue specific workshops.

Researchers presented the latest in National Vegetable Levy-funded innovation, reporting to delegates the outcomes of projects and how they can be adopted at a farm level. The concurrently run commodity-specific workshops proved popular with growers, enabling them to pick and choose their own program suited to their particular requirements.



a success by participants

"My compliments to all those involved in the conference. It was highly interactive and a great opportunity to network with other growers and researchers."

– NSW Grower.

The official conference dinner was held on the last night of the conference with over 300 delegates attending. After two solid days the dinner was an opportunity to relax, reflect on the conference and recognise individuals for their excellence within the vegetable industry through the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards.

Networking and knowledge sharing at the conference trade show was prevalent across the tradeshow floor during the entirety of the conference. Strong support from industry stakeholders provided a variety of information on products to growers, including new seed innovations, crop protection solutions, packaging, as well as a presence from the central markets and industry associations. Survey results showed that 57 per cent of respondents rated the tradeshow as 'excellent'.

Overall the conference survey feedback was exceptionally positive, with 60 percent of delegates rating the conference as 'excellent'. The survey also revealed that 90 percent of respondents would attend

another nationally focused vegetable industry conference. Face-to-face feedback from the conference has been overwhelmingly positive, mirroring the survey results, and suggesting a need for a follow-up conference.

Due to the success of this year's conference, another conference is currently being considered for mid-to late-2007.

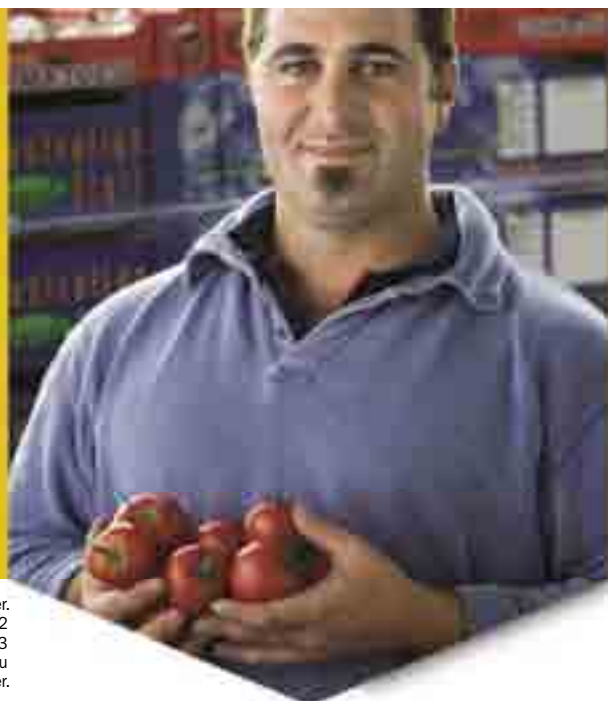
"Well presented, a good flow, interesting and it was great to see cooperation from all sectors of the industry." – WA Grower.

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Keeping ahead of the pack

Serge Canale of Simplot Australia speaks at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane. By Youna Angevin-Castro.

"The onus is on us to work closely with processors and others within the supply chain to eliminate costs," said Serge Canale, Executive General Manager of Supply Chain, Simplot Australia recently.

Speaking at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane in May, Serge indicated that rising costs of vegetable production along the entire supply chain were forcing processors such as Simplot to rationalise their processing activities in the face of competitive global threats.

Today, Simplot Australia - an American-owned division which produces Bird's Eye and Edgell's product lines - operates five manufacturing sites nationally, with 35 per cent of their business being outsourced.

"Our company history is relevant to the current picture for vegetables, because vegetables, especially frozen vegetables, are a major part of our business and our restructuring and plant closures have been as a direct result of our attempts to manage the competitive changes that we've experienced."

Serge said that the picture for Australian vegetables for the future will mirror those of Simplot's plants and businesses - some will survive and some won't, while many will need to undergo dramatic change to become competitive across all areas of processing.

He said that very low growth rates in the Australian market make capital investment very difficult to justify, making it difficult to offer new consumer products that are appealing and relevant.

Other threats to the local processing industry included low offshore labour costs, restrictive local industrial relations laws, and a growing consumer trend away from processed food products.

Very low growth rates in the Australian market make capital investment very difficult to justify.

"The consumer trend away from processed foods may prove to be a passing cycle, but it is likely to be sustained long enough to threaten the viability of investment in processing businesses. This is worsened in the slow-down in investment in innovation, which will make it harder for processors to hold their ground against fresh and speciality offerings."

Retailing moves towards privately labelled products is also a threat to the long term sustainability of companies such as Simplot.

"With the move by retailers to promote their own ranges and premium products, any manufacturer who does not have the first or second brand in any category is very vulnerable, and any reinvestment

in these lesser brands is fraught with risk," said Serge.

However, not all is doom and gloom for growers producing for processing markets.

"In our view, there is some benefit to the 'Made in Australia' claim," Serge said, "because the 'Made in Australia' tag will allow us to ask for a premium."

He also believes that recent changes to industrial relations laws are also a step in the right direction to attract investors.

"It is essential that we find a configuration at which the Australian processing food industry can operate profitably and sustainably. We believe the answer lies in a combined effort across the supply chain to work cohesively to eliminate costs - not just move them on - to allow us to establish products or cost outcomes which will allow us to compete sustainably.

"There will clearly always be labour-intensive products where we will never be able to match those countries with low labour costs, and this may include some vegetables currently manufactured here, but we will need to fine-tune the supply chain for all of our chosen products.

"This requires a willingness to change, a willingness to learn from others, and a willingness to work as a team for an outcome which benefits all." ■



John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL)

Consumer the key to innovation

Consumers are integral to the long term success of innovation in horticultural industries according to John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

"Horticulture is the second biggest agricultural industry, valued (in 04-05) at \$6.8 billion – bigger than dairy and wool combined – which is very powerful message when addressing innovation in some of the policy issues in Canberra.

"However, while we are very proud of our size, we are very small compared to someone like China, who produce about 180 times the amount of veggies as we do."

Addressing the industry at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in May, John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) said that over the last four years Australian horticultural industries had lost half a billion dollars as a result of a fall in exports and a rise in imports, with a \$94 million fall experienced by the vegetable industry alone.

With a small domestic population unable to support our agricultural industries,

increasing labour costs, and only a one per cent share of export markets, Australian producers are unable to compete with international traders on price alone.

"Commodity trading will lead to failure. We cannot compete on price," said John.

"We're at a crossroad – there are many opportunities and many challenges, and how we address them is going to make the difference of whether we go forward or backwards.

"Things are fairly competitive out there, and one way to face competition is through innovation."

John believes that the focus on consumers is integral to the long-term returns on the industry's research and development investment, and that Australian producers need to meet the highest demands of domestic and global consumers.

"The word consumer is paramount," said John. "In this competitive environment, if we're not going to be the cheapest producer, we have to give them something they want to buy.

"It is possible to deliver consumers consistent, quality product. You start at the consumer end, you work out what's important to them."

John also said that any innovation had to be economically viable to provide incentive for growers to implement innovation on farm.

"Innovation is possible, but there's a challenge in it. Innovation is about change. And when you have change, the status quo will fight you back. You need champions, and you're going to have to protect and support those champions.

"It is possible. Other industries have done it – you just require the will and dedication to make it happen." ■

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Coles announces new Aussie grown vegetable range at conference

A recent announcement by Coles Supermarkets to launch a range of 100 per cent Australian grown vegetables has been warmly welcomed by the vegetable industry.

Retailing giant Coles Supermarkets has announced a deal that will see Australian vegetable growers supply a new 'You'll Love Coles' frozen vegetable range. The 100 per cent Australian grown and packaged frozen vegetable range, to be sourced primarily out of Tasmania, will be rolled out across stores over the coming months.

The announcement, which was made by Cameron Trainor, General Manager Fresh Merchandise for Coles Supermarkets at the recent Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane, comes after months of campaigning by industry for retailers to support Australian grown produce.

"This deal will see the percentage of Coles house brand frozen vegetables range being 80 per cent Australian grown," said Cameron, during his keynote presentation at the conference.

Speaking on 'Retailing for tomorrow's consumer', Cameron discussed the changing trends in consumer buying habits over the last decade. Identifying choice, convenience and value as some of the key driving forces

behind consumer buying decisions, he also said that quality and freshness were paramount to successful retailing.

"Consumers are becoming more and more discerning," he said. "What satisfied the customer 10-15 years ago, may not pass muster now.

"The quality and freshness of the food offer is what consumers judge us by. That's why direct sourcing, the cold chain, and innovations, like the new plastic crates we're rolling out, are all given such priority. Consumers expect their fruit and vegetables to be as fresh as possible all year round."

Cameron identified the foundations of Coles' business as having an emphasis on looking after its customers; a plate-to-paddock mindset – starting with the consumer, not the other way around; communicating clearly with consumers and all in the supply chain; and innovating and adopting best practice in each link of the supply chain.

"It's a partnership between businesses to provide consumers with fresh food at good

value prices all year round – where each of us in the chain knows what is required of us, and that we are able to do so profitably."

So what will the future customer want?

"It's difficult to predict the future with any certainty, but I think we will see a continuation of current trends in product innovation and value-adding. If it's more convenient and a value-added choice for the consumer, it should work.

"I also think consumers feel an increasing sense of health and wellbeing when considering their food purchases – just look at the growing popularity of organic produce.

"And, of course, the customer demand for continually improving, better quality produce will continue unabated.

"Both retailers and growers must adapt, innovate and make sense of change if we are to compete and survive. We are in this together, and by working together I am confident we will succeed together."

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Fiona Chambers has been growing organics for 18 years.

Organic growth for vegetable industry

The organic industry has gone from a fad for hippies and health nuts, to a trendy food movement, and now to an established industry that can offer viable alternatives for conventional growers. By David Jarwood.

Growth in the organic industry was initially driven by concern for the environment and perceptions that organic food was better for the consumer. Growth was initially slow, but has now caught on - to the stage where major supermarket retailers have organic sections, export markets are opening up and inquiries are regularly made from conventional farmers looking to convert their properties. The industry is worth \$300 million annually in Australia, and growing by 25 per cent a year.

Behind the growth is a growing consumer demand for organic produce in the face of food scares, negative reaction to genetically-modified foods and a belief that organic food tastes better and is better for you. While Australia missed out on mad cow disease and other food problems that overseas markets have experienced, there have been local issues with contaminated food and some concerns over the amount of pesticides in conventional produce.

All this has helped lift the profile of the organic food industry.

Organic farming is gaining popularity and is being accepted by people all over the world. According to the film *The Future of Food*, the American market for organically grown food amounted to \$1 billion in 1994, and is now worth an estimated \$20 billion. A growing consumer market is naturally one of the main factors encouraging farmers to convert to organic agricultural production.

According to latest figures, Australia has 12.5 million hectares of certified farming area under organic management, although 75 per cent of this is rangeland. This represents 45 per cent of the world's organic farming land - making Australia number one in farming area under organic management, with over 2100 registered organic farming operations.

Organics is not farming by neglect. To be a good organic farmer you have to have good systems and have a very good awareness of the whole farming operation.

Organic farming refers to agricultural production systems used to produce food and fibre that prohibit artificial fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides. Organic farming management relies on developing biological diversity in the field to disrupt habitats for pest organisms, and the purposeful maintenance and replenishment of soil fertility.

Some of the essential characteristics of organic systems include: design and implementation of an 'organic system plan' that describes the practices used in producing crops and livestock products; a detailed record keeping system that tracks all products from the field to point of sale; and maintenance of buffer zones to prevent contamination from synthetic farm chemicals from adjacent conventional fields.

Certified organic refers to agricultural products that have been grown and processed according to uniform standards, verified by independent state or private organisations, and accredited bodies such as the Australian Certified Organic (ACO) and the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA). Certification is a three-year process that allows a producer access to selling produce on the organic market. (refer to p.18)

For organic farmers Fiona and Nick Chambers, going organic has been a big commitment, but not without rewards. They have been in the industry for 18 years and have seen a growing acceptance of organic farming and produce.

When the couple first bought their property in Victoria's Central Highlands region they were viewed by the conventional farmers in the area as oddities. That has now changed, and there are other organic farms adjacent and within close proximity to their property.

Fiona, who recently gave a talk at the ABARE conference in Canberra on Marketing to Secure Viability in the Horticulture Industry, said the organic industry was a growing area, but the same caution needed to be exercised as in any horticulture enterprise.

"There is opportunity within the organics industry and there is danger within it," she said. "It is just like any other business.

Continued on next page



Scott Kinnear of Organic Wholefoods in Daylesford, Victoria.

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Organic growth for vegetable industry (continued)

Rod May, Vice Chairman of the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA)

“The difference with organics is that it is a growing industry. It is a lot easier to find opportunities in a business that’s growing rather than one that is dying, such as the milk industry. In the dairy industry producers are having to fight amongst themselves to get a share of a dwindling market.

“Organics is no different to conventional farming in that you can be at risk if you specialise in an area.

“Once you start getting into economies of scale then you become vulnerable to what the market can do. If you gear yourself up to a big market that is volatile and it changes then you end up being the pawn.”

And Fiona and Nick should know, as the farm lost about \$200k in the space of a couple of months in early 2004. They lost their contract supplying organic carrots to Japan, had \$50,000 wiped off their contract with a large Australian supermarket and lost money from their own carrot juicing venture.

“We are now going full circle (from economies of scale) and going back to diversifying,” Fiona said of their operation, which is moving away from a reliance on carrots to include potatoes, pigs and mixed vegetables.

Organic certification

For conventional growers looking to convert to organic, certification is generally a three-year process from the first application.

Following an initial farm inspection, there will be a pre-certification period of one year, during which all produce grown is considered conventional.

There is the potential for some loss of income in the first year as farms enter the pre-certification phase, at the commencement of which conventional farming methods and inputs are phased out and converted to organic practices and during which product is not able to be sold as ‘organic’. A subsequent inspection will be arranged towards the end of your initial 12 months to ascertain the degree to which the property has met organic requirements. Produce is now termed “organic in-conversion” and can be sold at a premium.

The ‘in-conversion’ period will generally take two years to reach full certification, unless the farmer can prove the farm already meets the standards.

The final stage is “certified-organic”, where the produce can be marketed with full organic status and at organic premiums.

“It is important to not put all your eggs in the one basket. If you position your product in a market that is all about producing cheaper and cheaper, then it is a one-way road. And I don’t like the destination.

“If you go the cut-price marketing avenue you will get squeezed and squeezed

until eventually there is nothing left to be squeezed out. The alternative is to go for quality over cut-price products and provide a service or product that is different.”

Surrounding Fiona and Nick’s farm there are many conventional potato farmers who are facing a hazy future, due to the



uncertainty of their processing contracts. A growing number of these farmers are now inquiring into making the change to organic.

Fiona said the switch to organic was about paying more attention to the whole business, marketing to different areas and being diverse.

"A good conventional farmer can make a good organic farmer," she said. "But a bad conventional farmer will make a really bad organic farmer.

"Organics is not farming by neglect. To be a good organic farmer you have to have good systems and have a very good

awareness of the whole farming operation. I would never encourage a conventional farmer (to switch to organics) if they are struggling in their management systems."

Fiona said a care for the land was not just the domain of the organic farmer.

"I don't think conventional farmers should be seen as the devil as far as sustainability goes," she said.

"I have never met a farmer that likes using chemicals. They feel trapped. Because of the market pressure of cutting costs they feel trapped into using chemicals to increase their yield.

"The majority of conventional farmers have a real love for the land."

Without being able to use synthetic fertilisers, one of the keys to successful organic production is quality soil. Fiona and Nick bought their 100-acre farm because of the already established soil quality of the area.

In the past 18 years they have worked the soil, building it up with organic matter to such an extent that the organic certifying body in the UK - the Soil Association - says they have the best soil in the world.

Initially the maintenance and replenishment of organic soils can be a time-consuming

Continued on next page

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Organic growth for vegetable industry (continued)

process. But for the Chambers the hard work is now paying off. Each year they have less work to do on the soil and the processes that have been in place for a number of years continue to pay dividends with productivity steadily improving.

"We are now spending less and less on our fertiliser inputs, and our yields are increasing each year. There are not many farms in Australia that could make the same claim."

Scott Kinnear, who runs Organic Wholefoods, which has two stores in Melbourne and another in the regional centre of Daylesford, has been in the retail side of the organic industry for 16 years and seen the retailing of organic produce go from strength to strength.

When Scott started in the organic retail area 16 years ago his customers were "people who were sick or environmental zealots".

"Today the change is dramatic with all types of people buying organics," he said. "Acceptance is increasing and organics are a very positive area for Australia's horticultural industry to move into."

Scott said that recent Australian consumer data showed that 50 per cent of those surveyed had bought something organic in the past six months.

"That, to me, is the most exciting factor," Scott said. "While organics currently make up just 1-2 per cent of the total vegetable market and produce, this data shows the huge potential for growth."

Scott sees the growth of the market with people who are worried about the industrialisation of the food industry and of the impact of genetically modified food.

"I believe we will get to the point where half of all the food eaten and grown in Australia will be organic," he said.

"Any sort of health concerns about food will push people towards organic food."

Many natural health practitioners believe chemical additives and pesticides fuel allergies and autism. And over 80 per cent of cancer patients are prescribed an immediate organic diet.

Scott, who is also the spokesman for the organic body, Biological Farmers Association, said a major factor holding back the organic industry was the lack of definitive research into the effects of eating organic food.

A report in the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture stated that organic fruit and vegetables were 10 to 50 per cent

higher in antioxidants, and another by the UK Soil Association says that levels of Vitamin C are 27 per cent higher in organic food.

Another study compared organic milk to non-organic milk. The study, conducted in the United Kingdom in early 2005, showed organic milk had higher levels of vitamins and anti-oxidant minerals.

"Many people believe organic food is better for you," Scott said. "Once the research is conducted to provide people with tangible reasons for eating organic the industry will be validated."

And that research may not be far away, Scott said, with the European Union allocating \$100 million euros to study health and environmental benefits of organic food.

Scott said organic food was beginning to push into the mainstream with the major supermarket chains now stocking organic food, with more than 100 home brand organic products on the shelves.

"Simply having organic produce is the not magic wand for success."

"There is still a long way to go here. In the UK and Europe there are over 1500 home brand organic products."

Whether or not it's good for the body, research shows that organic farming is good for the environment. Rather than stripping soil, spraying chemicals and damaging land, organic farming gives back to the environment. It's a more labour-intensive farming process, providing rural jobs but increasing costs to urban consumers, but it's a direction in which more and more farmers are heading.

Despite strong growth in some overseas markets the future of the organic industry in Australia remains up in the air, according to Rod May, Vice Chairman of the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA).

Rod, who is also a certified organic producer, said Australia's organic industry was growing slower than overseas markets and it still did not have a totally secure base.

"Our trajectory seems to be smaller than other countries," he said. "In the US and Europe the retail growth rate of organics is about 20-30 per cent each year, here it is about 2-3 per cent."

While the Australian organic industry may be behind other countries, Rod sees this as an advantage in that "we can see

the shape of other industries and where the opportunities may lie".

He says the growth in overseas markets is not limited to the volume of produce being grown, but rather in innovation and development of new processed products.

"Processed and value-added organic food is where the growth has been noticed mostly," he said.

"You could say that processing and value adding is the future of the industry."

Rod said he could see the local industry as a whole growing steadily.

"The organic tag is trendy," he said. "Despite the novelty organic stuff – such as water, garden supplies, and even golf courses, legitimate growth will continue."

Rod said the research being conducted around the globe is giving organics the scientific respect and recognition it needed.

On a retail level Rod believes that organic food is overpriced, which is a limiting factor in the growth of the industry.

"In Australia organics remain very much a niche-orientated food, which has added to the price," he said. "While in other countries it is not an elitist food. In the US over half of the consumers of organic food are from lower socio-economic groups.

"Farmers here still get a good price, but the mark-ups are very big. Organics is a long chain with mark-ups at each link."

Part of the high price of organic production is a result of higher production costs and added exposure to diseases and pests.

"There are high labour costs and the risks of disease and pests can really damage a business," he said.

"Organic technology can be really exposed in a wet year from weeds, and an unlucky farmer can be wiped out in one growing season."

Rod sees many new people trying their hand at organic farming – with mixed success, and a high drop out rate.

He said the problem was that many people got into organics without a marketing background.

"People come in with a view of going organic and not thinking about how best to sell their produce," he said.

"Simply having organic produce is the not magic wand for success." ■



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The National Vegetable Levy

Millions of dollars are collected from vegetable growers every year through the National Vegetable Levy for industry specific research. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions.

What is the National Vegetable Levy?

The National Vegetable Levy is a levy payable on vegetables to provide funding for promotion, research and development on behalf of industry.

The levy is payable on vegetables produced in Australia and either sold by the producer, or used by the producer in the production of other goods. The current rate of levy for vegetables is calculated at 0.5 per cent of the value of vegetables at the first point of sale. This equates to 50 cents out of every \$100 of produce sold.

Why do we have a National Vegetable Levy?

The National Vegetable Levy was introduced and administered by the Australian government in 1996, at the request of the vegetable industry. The purpose of the levy is to provide projects and initiatives aimed at addressing major issues confronting the vegetable industry.

By pooling investment resources from the levy, the industry is able to maximise its potential to deliver outcomes on issues that individual growers would be unable to achieve on their own.

Are all vegetables levied?

Not all vegetables are levied. Currently the National Vegetable Levy is not payable on asparagus, garlic, herbs (other than fresh culinary shallots and parsley), melons, seed sprouts or fresh tomatoes. Potatoes, onions, processing tomatoes and mushrooms have separate levy arrangements and are not included in this program.

Who collects the levy?

The Levies Revenue Service is a government agency within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, responsible for the collection, administration and disbursement of the National Vegetable Levy on behalf of the industry.

Levies and charges are paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund, before disbursing them to Horticulture Australia (HAL). In the case of the Vegetable Levy, the Australian government matches the levy receipts dollar for dollar for the purposes of research and development expenditure.

Who determines how the levy is spent?

Currently, levy funds are administered through Horticulture Australia (HAL), who funds suitable research and development projects according to select criteria.

These projects are considered by HAL on the advice of industry representatives (Industry Advisory Committees), and subsequently selected or rejected according to their adherence to the funding criteria and their alignment with the industry strategic plan and industry priorities.

Strategic planning by industry is critical to ensuring good investment of the levy in order to maximise returns on funds, avoid duplication and ad hoc approaches to research and development. However, there is always flexibility to support research and development for unexpected issues which may arise.

HAL accepts proposals for projects to be funded through the levy in September each year. This 'Industry Call' for project funding is promoted through HAL, and application details can be obtained from their website www.horticulture.com.au.

How can I find out more about my levy investment?

Growers who would like to find out more about the projects funded by their levy can refer to a number of industry specific resources.

Vegetables Australia provides information about R&D projects funded through the National Vegetable Levy, and is distributed bimonthly. The magazine is aimed at providing an overview of your levy investment, by publishing easy-to-read, accessible articles about research currently being conducted.

Growers seeking more in depth information about levy-funded projects can refer to the AUSVEG Levy Payers website. This resource contains a list of currently funded projects, as well as reports and support information on recently completed projects.


To register, visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm

explained

What activities are funded by the National Vegetable Levy?

The vegetable industry has identified a number of key investment areas which focus on issues confronting the industry. Funds collected by the levy are allocated with consideration to these key areas, which include product development, market development, sustainability, supply chain competitiveness and industry communication and collaboration.

A diverse range of projects are funded each year – from crop management and breeding programs for specific vegetable commodities, conferences and study tours, industry development and market access, through to a range of newsletters and publications for industry. Vegetables Australia is an example of a project which is funded by the levy.

The research and development program has achieved many significant outcomes for growers over the years. However, not all research and development delivers problem solving outcomes – sometimes it is equally important to know what doesn't work as what does. 

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Source: DPI Victoria

The Better Brassica Roadshow: a model success?

Barbara Hall finds out that grower roadshows and information blitzes do work – if the results of the Better Brassica Project are anything to go by.

When a series of brassica workshops were held around the country late last year as part of the Better Brassica Project, two thirds of the brassica growers who attended said the roadshow had encouraged them to make changes to combat brassica diseases such as white blister and clubroot. And one third of the growers who didn't attend the workshops said they had changed their practices because of the disease and pest information that was mailed to them.

Six months after the roadshow and mass mail out, the growers had planted new varieties, improved farm hygiene, changed their chemicals and/or irrigation practices, and changed the soil pH. Of the growers who only received the mail out, 25 per cent had changed their irrigation practices. Some growers had decided to check out their nursery's hygiene protocols for the first time. Two growers were no longer growing broccoli because of the disease risk.

For the past 11 years, the industry has done significant research on destructive brassica pests and diseases, making brassica vegetables one of the most widely researched in Australia. In 2005 several hygiene and management strategies were developed for clubroot, plus a laboratory-based diagnostic test which helps identify sources of clubroot contamination.

Eleven Better Brassica Project workshops were conducted over five weeks in spring


last year, attracting 193 growers in all the main production areas: Cranbourne, Werribee and Bairnsdale in Victoria; Penrith and Bathurst in New South Wales; Gatton and Stanthorpe in Queensland; Perth and Manjimup in Western Australia; Devonport in Tasmania; and Virginia in South Australia.

Workshop participants received presentation packs containing fact sheets covering all aspects for managing clubroot and other brassica diseases; several disease notes on white blister; newsletter articles about clubroot and white blister; and a poster designed for their packing sheds and offices. Most workshops featured several researchers presenting their work, and allowed time to discuss issues such as emerging diseases, water, biosecurity and government policy.

Preventing disease in the nursery is a major industry objective, so vegetable seedling nursery managers were targeted with a specially produced publication and a poster specific to their own issues.

The factors which convinced the organisers that they had a great tool to deliver research & development (R&D) information were the positive comments from growers about the workshops; the roadshow's practical focus on a single commodity; the quality of information; and the advantages of economies of scale. The roadshow also built links

between interstate researchers and created opportunities for discussing current work and identifying new industry problems.

The motivation for the workshops was driven by the HAL brassica commodity group which counts ongoing information delivery to industry as an R&D priority. The volume and complexity of brassica research called for a direct approach, rather than simply distributing more publications. The Better Brassica roadshow presented research findings as a complete management package for growers. 

The bottom line:

- The Better Brassica Project roadshow presented information about brassica diseases through a series of national workshops.
- The project spawned a new national newsletter dealing with both brassica pests and brassica diseases.
- Posters and fact sheets are available from vegetable Industry Development Officers in all states; or by contacting Denise Wite at the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Knoxfield on 03 9210 9348.



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Resistance battle at the crossroads



Chris Azzi (Semins Seeds), Moustafa Osman (greenhouse vegetable grower), Stacey Azzopardi (Vegetable IPM Project Officer), Len Tesoriero (Plant Pathologist, NSW DPI) and Joseph El-Boustani (greenhouse vegetable grower) playing the new IPM card game launched at a recent greenhouse IPM meeting in Rossmore, west of Sydney. Source: Ron Aggs

Vegetable growers in the Sydney Basin are making significant improvements to their pest management strategies as they try to deal with the growing problem of pesticide resistance. Graham Gosper reports.



Vegetable IPM Project Officer, Stacey Azzopardi

Vegetable IPM Project Officer, Stacey Azzopardi has witnessed progress in pest management strategies in the Sydney Basin over the past 18 months, but she says some growers still have a long way to go.

Stacey, who is based at the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI)

Advisory Office in Richmond, is at the forefront of an extension project aimed at helping Sydney growers identify pest problems and implement integrated pest management (IPM).

The five-year project is focused on insect vectors and their associated plant viruses with particular emphasis on western flower thrips and tomato spotted wilt virus. It is led by Dr Stephen Goodwin, Senior Research Scientist for NSW DPI at Gosford Horticultural Institute and involves several NSW DPI research specialists.

Since the beginning of last year, Stacey has been helping growers to implement practical integrated pest management strategies and to develop a commercial service among horticultural consultants and pesticide suppliers to provide ongoing support for growers.

She said face-to-face contact with growers and industry representatives has proven the best way of getting the integrated pest management message across. Stacey has spent countless hours helping to set up demonstration farms as well as organising

and attending a range of seminars, farm walks and consultant training workshops.

She said repeated spraying of the same broad spectrum chemicals, poor farm hygiene and a lack of pest monitoring were among the most obvious management problems identified through the early on-farm work.

Such problems were being addressed on the demonstration farms and other growers were coming on board after seeing the benefits.

Progressive growers have been quick to realise the benefits of better spraying techniques for resistance management, monitoring and farm hygiene. Field vegetable growers, Stacey said, were generally more receptive to change than others, with much of this attributable to the success of the national diamondback moth project in brassicas.

There has also been progress on the services front with eight businesses in the basin area growing their business to include regular monitoring, technical support and

Western flower thrips program under threat, warns expert




Source: Lowan Turton

improved access to diagnostic services for growers. Those consultants that have been offering such services up till now are appreciating the increased demand for their products and services and the network of specialists that they are now able to contact.

Stacey has no illusions about the mountain of work that remains to encourage Sydney growers to embrace the benefits of integrated pest management. But she is confident that if enough growers work with their consultants to get the basics right others will follow and that will provide a sound foundation for development of more sophisticated programs.

Stacey is also encouraged by some basic shifts she has detected in the spray culture among growers. "There is a growing appreciation of the dangers of pesticide usage and resistance, and the cost benefits associated with regular pest monitoring and targeted spraying," she said.

"More growers are realising that they can rely on softer options when the pest numbers are low, and turn to the harder chemicals if needed. By keeping a clean farm, and always knowing what pests are in the crop, they can avoid the harder chemicals and complement soft chemical options with biological controls." 

A research scientist has warned that Australia's entire western flower thrips control strategy will be put in jeopardy if the insect control product spinosad is lost to pesticide resistance.

Dr Grant Herron is in charge of resistance monitoring at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, a NSW DPI facility at Camden, south-west of Sydney.

His warning follows some alarming findings on resistance development among field populations of western flower thrips in the Sydney Basin.

Grant said monitoring between 2000 and 2003 found resistance in many western flower thrips populations with some resistance detected against acephate, dimethoate, endosulfan, fipronil, methamidophos, methidathion, and spinosad. Subsequent laboratory selection of fipronil and spinosad found resistance to these insecticides could quickly increase.

"More recent monitoring has verified the laboratory finding and in 2005 further increases in spinosad resistance were detected in field populations," he said. "Spinosad resistance in western flower thrips from lettuce, for example, was found to increase from 40 to 87 fold from 2005 to 2006," he said.

"Spinosad resistance has now been detected at a frequency of 97 per cent on a single Sydney flower farm causing control failure."

Grant said spinosad is now at serious risk, yet it remains the only western flower thrips chemical compatible with integrated pest management (IPM) and biological control.

"If effective western flower thrips IPM is to progress, improved resistance management of strategic chemicals including spinosad is paramount," he said.

Grant said the industry must realise that though chemicals are largely used to control western flower thrips in Australia, chemicals alone are not sufficient.

"IPM is an important progression for western flower thrips control because of increasing and ubiquitous resistance to insecticides," he said. "It should be remembered that once pyrethroids were used against western flower thrips but now none are effective due to high-level resistance."

Grant said the failure to follow label directions when spraying was one obvious reason for the spinosad problems. Another was the difficulty in developing practical rotations with other insecticide groups with spinosad one of only a few products registered for western flower thrips control.

"That makes it essential to reduce pressure on the products that are available by taking an integrated approach to managing pests and spraying only when necessary," he said.

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Keeping it fresh

It's a family affair at Gazzola Farms on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, and a passion for quality, fresh produce that makes this business a success. Paul Gazzola speaks to Mark Beecham.

"It's a competitive industry which is never easy," said Paul Gazzola of Gazzola Farms on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. "It's long hours and hard work, but I have a passion for it and I love it."

Paul is a third generation vegetable grower, with properties in Somerville and Boneo. With a combined farm size of around 700 acres, and a core staff of forty to fifty people, the business grows a range of vegetables, carrots, celery, broccoli, Asian vegetables, lettuce and cos lettuce.

Paul currently runs Gazzola Farms with his brothers Colin and Andrew, carrying on the family business from their father Luis, who is now semi retired. The Gazzolas first started growing when Paul's grandfather Matteo migrated to Australia in 1925 from Italy, and set up business in Narre Warren South after the second World War in 1932 with his brother-in-law. Paul's father, Luis, along with his brother and two cousins, took over the business when Paul's grandfather retired and they eventually moved to a property in Cranbourne, about an hour south-east of Melbourne.

After many years of successful growing, the partnership separated, and Luis and sons moved into the Footscray wholesale market as agents, purchasing a store in the

market which they developed and ran very successfully for three years.

However, farming was always in the back of their minds, and soon the Gazzolas were looking for an opportunity to return to growing.

"My father always taught me that the difference between a good grower and a bad grower is what you leave behind in the paddock."

"Being farmers at heart, we were keen to get back into growing," Paul said.

This resulted in a move to Bundaberg, Queensland where the family purchased two sugarcane farms. Paul spent several years in Bundaberg learning to grow sugarcane, melons, capsicums and zucchini, until a tropical cyclone hit Bundaberg in 1991, and the Gazzolas realised that the area would not suit their long term plans for growing vegetables.

Once they made the decision to return to Victoria, part of the Bundaberg property was sold and land purchased in Somerville. In 1992, Paul returned to Victoria, while brother Colin remained in Bundaberg

for a further five years to grow asparagus and avocados.

Today, the three brothers run the business, with each managing discreet areas of the business. Paul runs the marketing, management and administration side of the business, while youngest brother Andrew looks after field operations at Somerville, and Colin manages all activities at the Boneo property.

Working from dawn till dark, six-and-a-half days a week doesn't leave Paul and his brothers with much spare time. When he does have some free time, Paul likes to spend it with his wife Joanne, and children – sons Luke, 15, and Adam, 13, and daughter Rachael, 11.

"I try to devote as much time to my family as possible, but it's never easy when you work seven days a week. However, within the business, we rotate a weekend off a month so I have some time with my family, which we all look forward to," Paul said.

Beyond the farm, the Gazzolas are also actively involved in other aspects of the vegetable industry. Luis holds the position of Chair of the Victorian Vegetables Growers' Association, of which Paul has been a committee member for the last eight years.



Paul is also a director of AUSVEG – a role he has been passionate about for six years – and has held the position of Treasurer for the last three years.

“I would hope I’m making a difference,” said Paul of his role with AUSVEG. “I try to bring a grower’s perspective to the table and am very aware of where the board needs to go, without forgetting the growers.”

“At the end of the day we have to answer to the growers and levy payers. As a levy payer also, I know what I would expect,” he said.

In business, Paul firmly believes that his family’s key to success has been establishing a brand and reputation through monitoring quality.

“My father always taught me that the difference between a good grower and a bad grower is what you leave behind in the paddock,” said Paul.

Technology has also played a large part in the operations of Gazzola Farms, with Paul employing the use of some very innovative technology to increase productivity and improve employee workplace safety. In the packing shed a fully automated robotic palletising system is used, which has the ability to sort and stack four different pallets at the same time. An automatic icing line for broccoli is also incorporated into the Gazzola setup. Gazzola Farms also participates regularly in field trials, with Paul feeling they are very important and beneficial to all parties involved

“One of the great benefits of being involved with the industry’s R&D program,

is getting to see the results first hand. It’s important for growers to work with researchers to produce accurate trials because, whilst researchers are great scientists, most are not great farmers. By working with researchers, we can provide assistance in producing realistic trial conditions and realistic outcomes for industry,” he said.

Gazzola Farms are a great supporter of the fresh food markets, and this has become an important aspect of their business decision-making. This has seen them develop strong relationships with other growers around the country, allowing them to supply their lines during their off season. They are also strong advocates for the central markets, running their own market section in Melbourne, as well as having very close working relationships with agents in all the main markets around Australia.

“We don’t make supermarkets a cornerstone of our business. We prefer to focus on supply to the fresh markets and the retailers who we feel are getting bigger and better in the industry.”

“The supermarkets are a power to be reckoned with, but not enough credit is given to the local retailers. They are doing a fantastic job and giving the supermarkets a run for their money, but they require growers like us to focus on their needs for quality and supply to give them an edge,” Paul said.

“A lot of people talk our vegetable industry down. But I believe that if you have a true passion and a desire to succeed, there is a great future in this dynamic and growing industry.” ■





A demonstration plot next to a greenhouse in South Australia that displays a range of native plants being evaluated.
Source: Glenys Wood



Three beneficial insects (parasitic wasps) that attack pests of vegetables and the native plants that they were collected from.
Source: Claire Stephens and Glenys Wood

Versatile natives may

Jodie Powell discovers that encouraging Australian growers to plant native species as a means of combating pests may give them the competitive edge in the international marketplace.

Research that began in South Australia, and is continuing in Queensland, may change the way growers look at native plant species.

CSIRO research scientist Dr Nancy Schellhorn first began looking at how revegetation with native plants could help growers control unwanted pests about three years ago.

“If you say ‘look at that weedy ditch – if you replant that with native vegetation which has nectar which will attract beneficials and not pests’, then growers may be able to see the benefits.”

Her research focused on identifying pests and beneficial insects associated with native vegetation in South Australia.

A move to Queensland about 16 months ago has allowed her to continue her research and she is now in the process of marrying results still coming in from the South Australia Research and Development Institute (SARDI), now led by Glenys Wood, with emerging data from Queensland’s Lockyer Valley.

Based at the CSIRO’s Indooroopilly laboratory in suburban Brisbane, Nancy is

trawling through thousands of samples in a bid to find the best and worst native species for growers to plant.

The aim is to create a database of natives that will not only attract beneficial insects, but do not harbour key pests, such as thrips (vectors of tomato spotted wilt virus). These could be used to replace weedy areas, establish wind-breaks and to prevent erosion.

The key, she says, lies in finding more than one incentive for growers to plant natives on their land.

As part of the project, Nancy and her team are also hoping to attract partners who are land managers in these rural landscapes. For example, electricity providers and catchment bodies in Queensland could help to identify species which can be used in rural areas that are low-growing and also of benefit to neighbouring farms. They are looking for plants which are easily propagated, fire-retardant, can suppress weeds, and prevent erosion along waterways.

“Ultimately we would like to understand what the key species that growers can introduce are, and what are some of the species that harbour pests,” Nancy said.

Nancy and her colleagues have also found side-industries which are making native species an attractive proposition,

including selling to the cut-flower and bush tucker markets.

A field day is planned for 27 July at Gatton in the Lockyer Valley to deliver results from initial findings and encourage growers to join the project.

“We’ll be talking about the project and also giving an update on parasitic wasps that have been introduced to control silver-leaf whitefly,” Nancy said.

She said the project was in its first phase and she is now working with Bronwyn Walsh at the Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to take the next step and to engage vegetable growers and their communities to get practical outcomes that mean profitable primary industries and healthy ecosystems.

“We know that growing native vegetation is not always good for growers,” Nancy said.

“In the horticulture business they have a lot of things to worry about, and pest control is just one of those issues.

“Trying to get someone to revegetate or maintain native bush just because it looks good may be unrealistic. However, looking at what it means to their business means we can make something happen.

"If you say 'look at that weedy ditch – if you replant that with native vegetation which has nectar which will attract beneficials and not pests', then growers may be able to see the benefits."

Nancy believes adding incentives could provide an opportunity for growers to embrace native planting as part of an integrated pest management strategy.

"If Australia is to have an edge in the market, we can't do it by reducing labour costs to compete internationally. But if we can use biodiversity it can give us that competitive edge because it differentiates our products.


"I think things like labelling that it's grown in Australia and that we're conserving the bush might be the way to go."

Nancy's interest in using native vegetation to enhance biodiversity, beneficial insects and pest control in horticulture systems began when she was working in the cotton industry in Narrabri, NSW.

"A colleague of mine and I were talking about how to use native salt bush as a habitat for beneficial insects," she said.

"We're getting very interesting results in South Australia. There certainly are some key native species that growers can introduce for long-term weed control and for pest control. Glenys at SARDI is encouraged that several growers are now replacing weedy habitats around greenhouses with native plants that have been identified as providing pest control and natural resource management."

Just as important to growers, Nancy said, was ensuring they were not planting species which would attract pests that damage crops.

"There are native insects that are pests of crops. Although we want to avoid on-farm plantings of natives that harbour native pests, we also want to avoid further removal of the bush, hence forcing these pests into crops. Integrating native vegetation and pest management can happen by understanding insect dynamics at the scale of the farm and landscape." 

The bottom line:

- Planting of native vegetation may encourage biodiversity, attract beneficial insects and assist in pest control of crops.
- Growers who replace weedy habitats with native plants are contributing to the long term control of unwanted pests.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: **VG05014**
Keywords: **Pest control, vegetation**

hold the key





Making WorkChoices work for growers



Much media attention has been given to the Australian government's recent workplace relations changes, but what do the changes really mean for farming businesses? Youna Angevin-Castro finds out.

In March of this year, the Australian government introduced a new national workplace relations system, aimed to cover up to 85 per cent of Australian employees. The new system, WorkChoices, claims to streamline workplace relations legislation by simplifying the system, and offering more flexibility and choice for workplaces.

For businesses with more than 100 employees, a person must have been employed for six months before they can pursue an unfair dismissal claim.

Media reports on the new reforms have been far from glowing, with suggestions that the new legislation undermines individual rights, and exposes employees to potential exploitation. Many examples of unfair practices have been reported on nightly news programs, with union representatives using the opportunity to reinforce their position against a number of the introduced reforms.

However, while attention has been turned to the fall out of the changes, very little information is available to clarify the new WorkChoices changes, and what they mean

to the everyday operations of businesses around the country.

What does WorkChoices mean for growers?

According to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the new workplace relations system, WorkChoices, gives Australia's farmers more choice and flexibility in the way they run their businesses.

"Flexibility is essential as agricultural production can be volatile, with fluctuations in climatic conditions affecting output substantially in some years," claimed a recent statement published by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

"This makes it particularly important for agricultural businesses to have flexible workplace arrangements so that working conditions are reasonably related to business needs."

So what do the changes really mean for farming businesses?

Work agreements

Farming businesses covered by WorkChoices will be able to negotiate either individual or collective workplace agreements



How to get the most out of WorkChoices

For most farmers to enjoy the benefits of WorkChoices, they will need to incorporate their business. This is because the WorkChoices legislation is largely based on the corporations power granted to the Commonwealth under the Constitution.

About 90 per cent of Australian farming businesses are not incorporated. Sole traders and partnerships also are not incorporated entities.

Incorporating a business involves paying a fee to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission which, from 1 July, will be reduced from \$800 to \$400. Becoming incorporated also has tax and other implications.

Growers in Victoria, the ACT and the Northern Territory do not need to incorporate because businesses in those jurisdictions are already covered by the federal workplace relations system.

Transitional arrangements for unincorporated employers currently covered by the federal system will apply for up to five years. After that time they will revert to state-based workplace relations systems.

with their employees. Agreements cover conditions such as pay, hours and leave.

Individual agreements, also known as Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), are negotiated directly between an employee and his or her employer. Collective agreements are negotiated between a group of employees in a workplace and their employer, or between a union and an employer.

New standards

Under WorkChoices, wages and conditions in all agreements must at least meet the minimums contained in the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard including:

- minimum and classification wages as set by the Australian Fair Pay Commission;
- a maximum of 38 hours per week of work;
- four weeks of annual leave per year (with five weeks for shift workers who regularly work Sundays and public holidays);
- 10 days of personal/carer's leave per year, with provision for additional unpaid personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave;
- 52 weeks of unpaid parental leave;
- casual loadings.

If these award conditions are not specifically referred to in the new agreement, the award conditions will continue to apply. Other conditions can be negotiated by agreement between employers and employees.

Unfair dismissal

The new laws claim to ease the burden of unfair dismissal provisions on Australian businesses. It will exempt businesses that employ up to and including 100 employees from the federal unfair dismissal laws.

For businesses with more than 100 employees, a person must have been employed for six months before they can pursue an unfair dismissal claim. In addition, where the employment has been terminated because the employer genuinely no longer requires the job to be done (that is, where the employee's employment has been terminated because of operational requirements), the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will be able to refuse any application for unfair dismissal. ■

i For more information on how the new WorkChoices workplace reforms will affect your business, visit www.workchoices.gov.au or call the WorkChoices Infoline on 1300 363 264



Kristen Stirling, development officer for the Department of Agriculture WA in one of the field experiments.
Source: Department of Agriculture WA

Alternative plantings trialled on

Increasing planting densities of cauliflower to gain more efficient use of farm machinery and greater marketable yields is being trialled in Western Australia. By Carolyn Walker.

Dr Kristen Stirling, Research and Development Officer for the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, said research into alternative planting configurations for cauliflower commenced in June 2004 as part of a project to assist with the development of the lettuce industry in the South West region.

This agronomic technique is also being investigated as a tool for improving the uniformity of curd (edible flowering head) maturation, while potentially increasing total and marketable yield. Improving the uniformity of curd maturation will result in a decrease in the spread of harvest so that producers are spending less time and money harvesting crops.

"Lettuce production needs to be at high densities to be economically viable, and is usually planted in three or four row configurations," Kristen said.

"We thought that if cauliflower could be successfully grown at higher densities in a four-row configuration, instead of the standard two, then one piece of machinery could be used to plant both lettuce and cauliflower crops. This would also be more economically viable for producers."

Four trials each year are being conducted over two years at both Manjimup (loam soil type) and Medina (sandy soil type) research stations to ensure that differences in environmental conditions on the crops between years are assessed. A large scale commercial field trial on the most successful planting density and row configuration is

planned for each location at the end of the project. This will provide producers with an opportunity to see how the alternative planting configurations can be managed in a crop of commercial size.

"We thought that if cauliflower could be successfully grown at higher densities in a four-row configuration, instead of the standard two, then one piece of machinery could be used to plant both lettuce and cauliflower crops."

Fertiliser requirements are also being investigated, particularly the rates of phosphorus and nitrogen application, with both fertiliser and irrigation techniques being refined to develop a complete management package for growers.

Kristen indicated that so far, the trials had gone well, particularly down at Manjimup.

Cauliflower plants are commercially grown in a two row per bed system with spacing between rows usually fixed at 0.80m and within rows at 0.40m, although spacings vary between grower properties.

Kristen said that past research had investigated increased planting densities within a two row configuration. Between row spacing was fixed at 0.80m and plants were grown at within row spacings of 0.30m, 0.35m, 0.40m and 0.45m.

Although an increase in yield was observed, increasing plant density within the two-row per bed system did not improve uniformity of curd maturation.

"We then undertook a trial using lettuce planting machinery to achieve higher plant densities," Kristen said.

"Seedlings were planted into a four-row configuration and offset in each row in a diamond pattern, instead of the commercial parallel standard. Between row spacing was fixed at 0.35m and within row spacings of 0.40m, 0.50m, 0.60m, 0.70m and 0.80m tested."

As the trial program progressed, the 0.40m and 0.50m within row spacings were dropped as they were found to be too extreme. The trials then focused on 0.60m, as it was producing the highest increase in marketable yield compared to the commercial standard two row configuration and the best curd weight and size. A three row configuration of the best planting density has been introduced into the trial program and increased planting densities of broccoli are also being assessed.

A couple of issues were identified with high density planting, with one being an increase in yellowing of curds, which occurs when they are not covered properly prior to harvest.

"Growers expressed concern about the difficulty of covering associated with increased planting density, so to overcome this, we are trialling the use of shade cloth as an alternative covering mechanism," Kristen said.



Some of the four and two row configurations investigated during the research program.
Source: Department of Agriculture WA

cauliflower crops

“Several growers have expressed interest in this if it proves to be successful.”

Another main issue was that to realise the potential of high density planting, fertiliser programming needed to be modified. Consequently, an increased rate of phosphorous and nitrogen was applied as trials progressed.

Kristen said that industry had been supportive of the project.

“We’ve had quite good turn-outs at field walks, and have discussed the progress at regular grower group meetings,” she said.

“Growers are mostly interested in the marketable yield increases and are also very keen to achieve our end goal of one-pass harvesting, which could be realised through agronomic techniques, such as increased planting density.

“We’re keen to see more grower involvement which will hopefully occur towards the end of the project as a complete management package is developed.

“The industry is in a lull at present, but it is important that we have the research done and can start implementing some of these practices as soon as it picks up again.”



David Tooke, technical officer for the Department of Agriculture WA points out to producers some of the equipment used in the trial program.
Source: Department of Agriculture WA

The bottom line:

- Alternative cauliflower planting configurations were trialled in an attempt to achieve higher marketable yields.
- Four-row configurations, rather than the traditional two-row commercial standard are found to produce increased marketable yields.
- Trials will continue until the end of 2006.



For more information: Visit
www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: **VG04008**
Keywords: **Cauliflower, planting**



Thermogradient testing. Source: TIAR



Hydroprimed onion germ test. Source: TIAR

New research offers boost to

Availability of quality hybrid seed varieties has often been a problem for growers but, as Simon Adams discovers, new methods currently being developed may help ease the problem.

A greater variety and better quality of brassica, carrots and onions are likely to be available to growers as a result of research currently underway aimed at improving existing seed supplies.

Due for completion in the middle of this year, the research, which was conducted with support from seed companies South Pacific Seeds and Rijk Zwaan, is seeking ways in which to improve the availability and quality of hybrid seed varieties for brassica, onion and carrot growers by reducing the cost of seed production and increasing reliable yields of seed crops through developing methods to improve the quality of seed viability and vigour.

"The benefit we're trying to deliver back to the industry is more reliable supply of high quality seed," said Dr Cameron Spurr of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR).

"Currently, some hybrid varieties aren't available because it's too difficult to produce commercial quantities of seed in an economical manner," he said.

Brassica crops in Australia (cauliflower, cabbage and broccoli) are almost entirely grown from hybrid varieties of seed, while

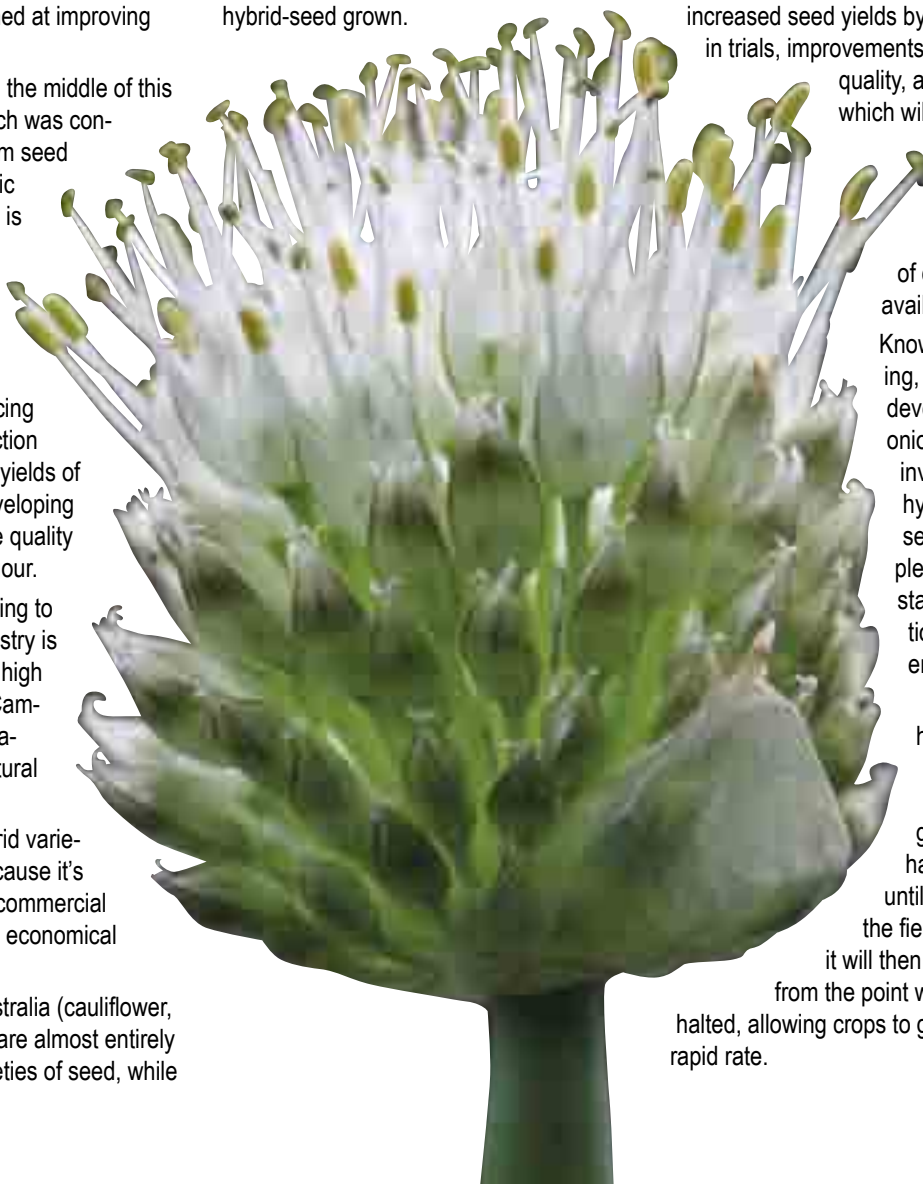
carrot crops are approximately 60-70 per cent hybrid-seed grown, and onions are approximately 50 per cent hybrid-seed grown.

Among the recommendations so far developed are management strategies for brassica crops that have demonstrated increased seed yields by up to 30 per cent in trials, improvements in carrot seed

quality, and a technique which will enable faster onion seedling establishment and improve the overall quality of onion hybrid seed available.

Known as hydropriming, the process developed to improve onion seed vigour involves controlled hydration of the seed to allow completion of the early stages of germination prior to root emergence.

Once the seed has completed the early stages of germination, growth can be halted in the seed until it is planted in the field, at which point it will then continue growing from the point where growth was halted, allowing crops to grow at a more rapid rate.





Onion seed crop. Source: TIAR



hybrid seed availability

“Our research has shown that hydropriming can be used to prevent the occurrence of seedlings with stunted roots, a significant problem for both seed producers and seed users,” Cameron said.

Once the seed has completed the early stages of germination, growth can be halted in the seed until it is planted in the field, at which point it will then continue growing from the point where growth was halted, allowing crops to grow at a more rapid rate.

“The potential benefit of this is more uniform establishment and higher crop yields.”

Early results have also shown the hydropriming process starts up the seed’s metabolism and enables it to repair damage that can cause root abnormalities, leading to higher quality crop yields.

“Commercial and field evaluation of this technology is at a very early stage, so it is too early to gauge the true potential of this technology for the onion industry,” Cameron said, although he added that initial results were encouraging.

“The real advantage of the hydropriming method lies in the fact that after the seed has been treated it can be re-dried for sowing, or storage, whilst still retaining the benefits of priming,” he said.

Onion seed producers who have trialled the hydropriming method expect the seed to exhibit improved growth characteristics, such as how well it will establish and how uniformly the seed will come up.

“These trials have shown greater germination and faster and more uniform seedling establishment in the field for hydroprimed compared to non-primed onion seed, which should contribute to more uniform bulb size and increased yields,” Cameron said.



Onion trial. Source: TIAR

In the course of this research project, carrot seed production has been re-established in Tasmania after a 15 year lapse due to poor seed quality, with approximately 100 hectares now dedicated to producing carrot seed.

The Australian seed industry is predominantly focused on developing product for the export industry as well as the local industry, and the current research has shown promising results for improving both local and international product quality, such as lifting the volume of exportable quality carrot seed by 30 per cent.

Key issues determining market success are cost of production, but also capacity to produce reliable yields of high quality seed, particularly of hybrid varieties.

“Some onion seed produced in Australia fails to meet local or export requirements for germination and vigour. Hydropriming has the potential to overcome this. For example, a lot of onion seed produced in Australia meets export standards without need of priming.” Cameron said.

Further trials are to be conducted with improved seedlings in order to assess the commercial viability of the study’s findings, with work expected to be completed in mid-2006.

The bottom line:

- Commercial hybrid seed production has been limited by economic factors.
- New research is using a hydropriming technique to improve hybrid seed viability and vigour for brassicas, carrots and onions.
- Initial trials indicate that seeds using the hydropriming method demonstrate improved growth characteristics and yield.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: **VG03084**
Keywords: **Hybrid seed, hydropriming**



Source: DPI NSW

Fronting up to bean fungi

Graham Gosper uncovers a three-state research project aimed at helping growers to manage root and stem diseases in green beans is shedding new light on the organisms responsible, but uncovering the complexity of the control battle at the same time.

Research being conducted by NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is shedding light on organisms responsible for root and stem diseases in green beans. Focused on fresh bean growing areas in northern NSW and Southern Queensland and the processing growing areas in Tasmania, the project is addressing the management of soil-borne fungi such as *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, *Fusarium* and *Aphanomyces* which cause a range of bean disease symptoms (some of which are commonly referred to under the general term red root disease).

Project leader and plant pathologist Andrew Watson said testing in the three states has isolated a range of disease-causing fungi, including some which are common to all three growing regions.

"We have also found that different fungi can exhibit similar symptoms in different regions and even among different farms," Andrew said. "That makes it difficult for growers to correctly identify the fungi responsible."

Add to that findings that rainfall (or excess irrigation) and soil compaction can affect the diseases and the fact that many organisms

produce structures that carry them over from one season to the next, and you get some idea of the control battle the growers face.

"All the findings underline the need for growers to develop a multi-faceted approach for effective management and control," Andrew said.

To that end the project team is working with growers to develop control options and various seed dressings have been trialled on beans in NSW and Tasmania.

Andrew has been at the forefront of work in northern NSW, conducting tests involving a 90-hectare bean growing farm near Nambucca Heads.

He set up a work station there when the project began in autumn 2004 collecting soil and seed samples for greenhouse testing at his home base at Yanco Agricultural Institute.

After a series of trips between the two centres he isolated the *Aphanomyces* fungus and established it as one of the main causes of disease in that area. This fungus causes total breakdown of lower stem/root tissue but if weather conditions improve, bean plants can recover (with some yield loss) by producing new roots above the damaged area.


"*Aphanomyces* is very difficult to isolate from infected plant material," Andrew said. "Often other fungi such as *Fusarium* and *Pythium* will be isolated and the symptoms will be wrongly attributed to them."

Aphanomyces has been found in NSW and Queensland beans before, but Andrew plans to compare samples from both states for the first time.

He has also been working on control options for the fungus.

"We have carried out seed dressing and in-furrow fungicide trials to reduce disease levels," he said. "Seed dressings are a possible early control."

"We have had some good results with two broad-spectrum fungicides that are not recorded as being effective against *Aphanomyces*."

"When it comes to control there is clearly no silver-bullet solution outside fumigation, and that raises cost and health issues. This is a war that has to be fought on many fronts." 

Why Greg joined the fight



Source: DPI NSW



Source: DPI NSW

The bottom line:

- Disease-causing fungi are found to be responsible for root and stem disease in green beans.
- Growers need to apply a multi-faceted approach to management.
- Seed dressings and fungicides may provide effective control.



For more information, visit
www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
 Project number: **VG03002**
 Keywords: **Beans, fungi**

Greg Silvia spent years running away from the root and stem disease that plagued his bean crops. “When we encountered a problem we just moved on to another block and hoped it wouldn’t happen again,” he said.

Now, with the help of researcher Andrew Watson, Greg is tackling the problem head-on.

Greg, 49, operates a 90-hectare property in partnership with his brother Kevin at Valla, a few minutes drive from Nambucca Heads in northern NSW. They also lease an adjoining 80-hectare farm. With the help of Greg’s son Jason they grow up to 40 hectares of beans a season and raise cattle.

Greg’s father first started growing beans in the early 1950’s and fungal diseases have been an ongoing problem in the area. Greg became involved in the current trials two years ago. “Andrew set up a work station here and started taking soil samples,” he said.

Greg has learnt a lot about the fungi as a result of Andrew’s work and he is keen to try some of the seed dressing techniques that have been trialed.

“And there have been other benefits,” he said. “The soil testing has helped us identify blocks on the farm where bean crops are most likely to succeed.”

Greg said it will be an enormous benefit to the area if the disease problems can be overcome. He said farms in the area had a long-established reputation for supplying quality beans and they are ideally placed to respond quickly to the needs of the large Sydney market.



Artificial infesting of capsicums with fruit fly eggs.
Source: QDPI&F



Experimental Vapour Heat Treatment System.
Source: QDPI&F



Shower cooling of capsicums after heat treatment.
Source: QDPI&F

New research turning up the heat on fruit fly

Simon Adams discovers current postharvest research that is providing a new solution for growers to combat fruit fly for their export crops.

Heat treatment research currently underway is aiming to give capsicum growers new weapons in the fight against fruit fly.

Due for completion in late 2006, the research is focused on developing a non-chemical postharvest treatment to maintain exports to New Zealand and interstate markets.

The main advantage of heat treatments are that they are residue free and, as such, can be used by both conventional and organic producers.

Fruit flies are a major quarantine obstacle for export and interstate trade, with disinfestation treatments after harvest required in most instances to overcome quarantine barriers.

Project leader Elizabeth Hall from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland (DPI&F) said the main advantage of heat treatments are that they are residue free and, as such, can be used by both conventional and organic producers.

A heat treatment is applied once the vegetable has been picked and delivered to the packing house and involves heating the vegetable to the point where it kills fruit fly eggs and larvae inside the vegetable without affecting the quality of the vegetable.

To date, heat treatment research conducted by DPI&F has been completed

on a range of commodities following the method's successful implementation on Australian mangoes to Japan.

After initially being approved for the Kensington Pride variety of mango, the heat treatment has been approved for four other varieties of mangoes into Japan. Vapour heat treatment (VHT) is also now recognised as an approved treatment against fruit fly for mangoes into China and Korea.

In addition to mangoes, research has also been specifically undertaken for export of tomatoes, rockmelon, honeydew, watermelon, zucchini and button squash.

"The research work for the cucurbit and tomato postharvest heat treatments is completed and export submissions are currently being prepared," Elizabeth said.

"Our main aim of the current capsicum project is to provide non-chemical alternatives to maintain market access to New Zealand and interstate markets," she said.

"Because we have undertaken our research using international standards, we are hopeful that the treatments will also be accepted in other export markets."

Initial research was conducted to identify the most heat resistant species of fruit fly which then became the focus for more extensive heat treatment testing.

The main challenge encountered with developing the postharvest heat treatment has been finding the balance between maintaining vegetable quality, a good shelf life and fruit fly mortality.

"We have investigated a range of heating rates, relative humidity levels, and various time periods," Elizabeth said.

In addition to the basic heat treatment solution, research is being undertaken to combine heat treatments with low oxygen and heat treatments followed by cold storage.



Source: QDPI&F

"Post treatment we have also looked at water cooling, forced air cooling and a range of cold storage temperatures.

"We still have more trials to undertake and this includes combining vapour heat treatment with controlled atmosphere treatment," she said. 🌿

The bottom line:

- Heat treatments are being used to eradicate fruit fly.
- The treatments are residue free, and have positive implications for exports.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: **VG04006**
Keywords: **Capsicum, fruit fly**

Mr John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia, presents Dr Elizabeth Minchinton of Victoria DPI with the Researcher Award at the inaugural Vegetable Industry Awards in Brisbane.



Tim Richards speaks to Dr Elizabeth Minchinton, a researcher with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Knoxfield.

When Dr Elizabeth Minchinton attended the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards in Brisbane recently, she was blissfully unaware that she was heading for an Academy Awards moment. With her team members sitting by her in the audience, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries researcher was astonished to hear her name announced as the recipient of the inaugural Researcher Award.

Elizabeth was delighted by the accolade. “I was very surprised, and very honoured,” she said. “I had no idea it was coming.”

She’s quick to make the point that the honour extends beyond herself.

“Research isn’t a solo effort, there’s a whole network and support team behind that award. There are your immediate team members, the people who do quality assurance (QA) on your publications, people who keep an eye on the budget for you. There’s a whole suite of people behind you.”

She also tips her hat toward the people on the land.

“You can’t do these sorts of things without the support of growers. We’ve been very fortunate in having growers who are prepared to tell us what they think, and support us.”

It’s not surprising to discover that such an eminent researcher has always taken an interest in agriculture.

“I come from a farming background,” Elizabeth said. “So I always had an interest in gardening and vegetables. As a kid I had a little garden of my own. One thing just naturally followed on from another.”

Nowadays her main interest is in researching predictive models which forecast the growth and activity of troublesome diseases.

“You can’t do these sorts of things without the support of growers. We’ve been very fortunate in having growers who are prepared to tell us what they think, and support us.”

“We collect weather data, add to it what we know about the fungus’ biology, and produce a mathematical model that gives a forecast of what the fungus will do in the field.”

As she explains, these models are potential keys to reducing the costs of production while maintaining quality, as they can help growers spray crops only when a fungus is active.

“I’ve been interested in these models for the last ten years. I’m involved in actually applying them in the field, and saying ‘hmm, no, I think we need to modify this a bit’.”

What would she like to work on in the future? “I think there’s a lot more we could do with disease predictive models. New generation weather stations will help modelling be taken up very quickly. There’s great potential there.”

When she manages to drag herself away from her research, which involves regular interstate flights for field trials, she spends even more time up in the air.

“I fly aeroplanes,” said Elizabeth when asked about pastimes. “But I’ve been a bit too busy in the last 12 months. I’m hoping to get back into that.”

As for specific highlights of her career, Elizabeth declines to mention any particular projects, focusing instead on the rewards of seeing her research put into practise.

“To do the job and do it well, and know that the growers appreciate what you’re doing, is really satisfying,” she said. Awards aside, it seems that a job well done can be its own reward. 🌱



Diamondback moth (*Plutella xylostella*)

As one of the most destructive insect pests of brassica crops, the diamondback moth (*Plutella xylostella*) has presented major problems for growers across Australia. However, chemical pesticide use for its control as proven to be inadequate in the battle against a pest whose eradication is believed to cost close to US\$1 billion globally per year.

Named for the distinct diamond-shaped markings found on the adult moth's folded wings, the diamondback moth is known to target brassica crops, including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage and brussel sprouts.

Management of the diamondback moth is best achieved through principles of integrated pest management.

The adult moth is about 10mm long, and found to be most active amongst crops in the early evening. However, it is the caterpillars, rather than the adults, which cause the greatest damage to crops.

Female moths lay their eggs amongst the foliage of the brassica plants. Pale yellow and approximately 0.5mm in length, the eggs can often be discovered in small clusters near the veins of the plant's leaves. The eggs hatch after three to eight days, and the young caterpillars burrow into the plant leaf where they feed.

It is this feeding which causes damage to crops. During the early stages of their growth cycle, the caterpillars cause leaf mining as they tunnel inside the leaf. But as they mature, the caterpillars emerge to feed on the leaf surface, creating large holes and compromising plant development. The caterpillar may also tunnel into cabbage heads and brussel sprouts, or feed inside

broccoli and cauliflower florets. This makes it impossible to use pesticide sprays, and renders the crop unfit for sale.


The life cycle of the diamondback moth is relatively short, depending on temperature. Within one to two weeks of hatching, the fully-grown caterpillars (which are about 10mm long and bright green) will pupate inside a silken cocoon, before emerging as an adult moth after five to ten days. In warm weather, the diamondback moth can develop from egg to adult moth in one month.

Management of the diamondback moth is best achieved through principles of integrated pest management. Reliance on broad-spectrum insecticides has resulted in the development of resistance, and risks the destruction of the moth's natural predators, such as parasitic wasps.

The use of biological insecticides, instead of chemical pesticides, has been found to be effective against the diamondback moth. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) has been found to be useful, as it targets only caterpillars, and does not harm adult parasitic wasps

or other natural predators. However, some resistance to Bt has been reported overseas, so it should not be relied upon as the sole strategy for managing the diamondback moth.



Measures should be taken to reduce the likelihood of moth infestation. Regular crop monitoring means that the moth can be controlled before it becomes a major problem. Good crop hygiene, sensible farm layout, and production breaks during very warm weather can also contribute to reducing the impact of this insidious pest. 



For more information about diamondback moth research, visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers.login.cfm.
Keyword: **Diamondback moth**



Jeff McSpedden, AUSVEG Director (far left) and David de Paoli, Chairman of Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association (centre) accept an award on behalf of the vegetable industry.

Australian vegetable growers recognised internationally for commitment to environment

The efforts of Australian vegetable growers in phasing out the use of methyl bromide were recognised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at the recent 2006 Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award, held in Washington DC in May.

The Australian vegetable industry was among the 23 individuals, organisations and companies from around the world that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recognised for their efforts to protect the Earth's climate and stratospheric ozone layer.

Australian vegetable growers, as represented by AUSVEG, in conjunction with Australian strawberry growers, were acknowledged for their leading role in the phase-out of methyl bromide in Australia. This was achieved by a strong industry-government partnership to implement collaborative, targeted research and adopt alternatives.

Farms in the Bundaberg region, once Australia's main user of methyl bromide, now produce 100 per cent of their vegetables using ozone-friendly alternatives. Growers in the Carnarvon region eliminated methyl bromide in 2002.

Australian horticulturists achieved this success through a nationwide network of growers, researchers, extension agents, government and methyl bromide and alternative suppliers dedicated to environmental protection.

Jeff McSpedden, AUSVEG Director and Chair of the National Environmental Committee, and David de Paoli, Chairman of the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association accepted the award in Washington on behalf of the industry.

"It is both an honour and a privilege to receive this award on behalf of the Australian vegetable and strawberry growers who have been committed to environmentally sound vegetable production," said David.

"The Australian vegetable and strawberry growers of Australia were dedicated to finding an alternative to methyl bromide, in the knowledge that sound environmental practice, coupled with integrated agronomic management involving input from industry, government, growers and researchers is the only way to secure the future of food production in a globally competitive environment...Australia is leading the way in clean, green environmentally sound vegetable production.

"Winning the award would not have been possible without the dedicated work and commitment demonstrated by all involved."

Established in 1990 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Stratospheric

Ozone Protection Awards recognise exceptional leadership, personal dedication, and technical achievements in protecting the Earth's stratospheric ozone layer.

In sixteen years, the Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award has been presented to 495 individuals, organisations and teams from 40 countries. In 2005, the winners of the climate protection award and the stratospheric protection award collectively purchased more than 1.5 million megawatt hours of green power to avoid burning fossil fuels. They also generated wind and solar power onsite, increased energy efficiency, recycled refrigerants, and slashed the use of ozone-depleting substances and greenhouse gases.

"By conserving resources and committing to renewable power, these leading companies are proving that doing what is good for the environment can also be good for business," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson.

"Building on President Bush's commitment to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, EPA is working with our partners at home and abroad to reduce their climate footprints in cost-effective ways." ■

Trade pressure mounts on Australian vegetable growers

Trade data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows increasing competitive pressure on Australian vegetable growers.

In the ten months to May 2006, the value of vegetable imports into Australia continued to grow and the value of Australian grown vegetable exports declined.

The balance of trade in vegetables is in deficit to the tune of \$90 million. Four years ago, over the same ten months of the financial year, the trade balance was a positive \$58 million.

AUSVEG Economist Ian James said that the figures underline the increasing import pressures on Australian vegetable growers and difficulty in penetrating offshore markets.

“The data paints a pretty clear picture on where the Australian vegetable industry is at. Competing with lower cost of production countries such as China means that Australian growers will need to look for new ways to create a competitive advantage,” Ian said.

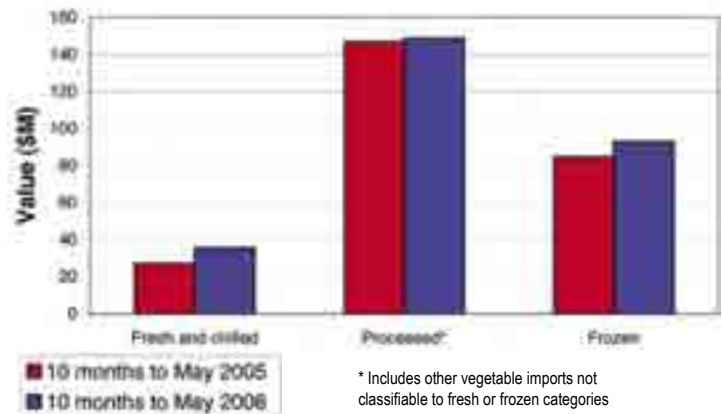
“Going forward, industry change, innovation and enhanced marketing is a must if Australian vegetable growers are to remain competitive in domestic and foreign markets.”

Ian said that there were some positives in the trade data with a pick up in the value of onion exports into Europe and carrots into the Middle East, Taiwan and Indonesia.

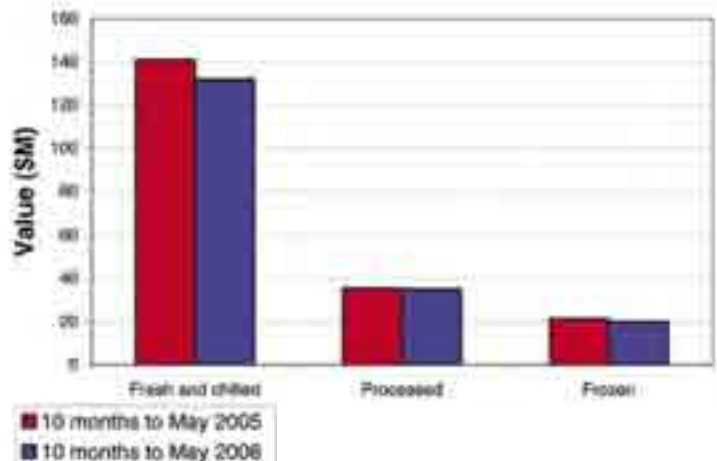
Vegetable industry data snap-shot:

- Frozen vegetable imports are up almost 10 per cent with substantial rises in potatoes and vegetable mixes mainly from New Zealand.
- Imports are up 7 percent on the equivalent months of last financial year. There have been some large percentage increases in some fresh vegetable imports, with New Zealand and China the major source countries.
- Australian vegetables exports are continuing to diminish falling 6 percent. In particular exports to Japan fell substantially down 19 percent and the freefall in exports to Malaysia over the last four years continues, with exports falling 27 percent.

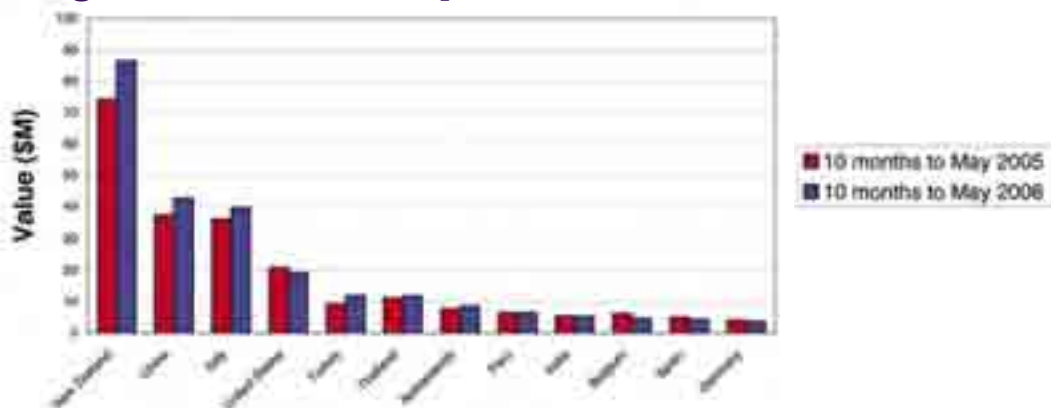
Australian vegetable product imports



Australian vegetable product exports

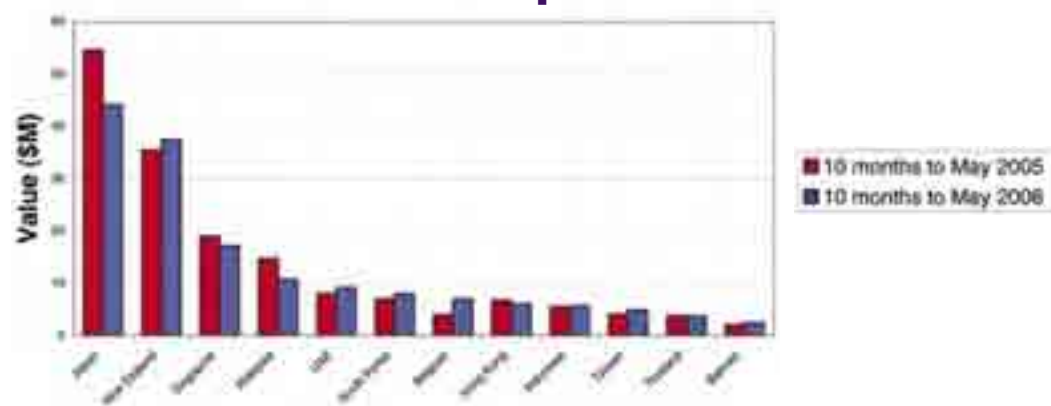


Origin of Australian imports



Top 12 source countries

Destination of Australian exports



Top 12 destination countries

Vegetable consumption in 2020

Many factors can affect future consumption trends, some of which are independent of local influences. Global trends can inform Australian patterns, particularly in countries which have a similar demographic mix to our own. It is therefore sometimes useful to look to other nations, such as the United States, for key indicators which may shed light on the local situation.

Economic research in the US suggests that rising incomes, improved dietary knowledge and understanding, an ageing population and changing ethnic demographics are all factors which will contribute to patterns of vegetable consumption out to the year 2020.

As the population becomes better educated, vegetable consumption is expected to increase. Improved dietary knowledge combined with elevated socioeconomic positioning will make the consumption of fresh vegetables, with the exception of potatoes more desirable. Per capita potato consumption is likely to experience a decrease, as the popularity of carbohydrate conscious diets continue to rise.

Rising incomes are forecast to lead to a rise in vegetable affordability raising the per capita vegetable consumption of lower income groups.

Changing ethnic composition of the population will lead to varying rates of consumption growth between different vegetables. Market opportunities will expand for some vegetables which were previously ignored, while others may experience a decline.

Increased life expectancy would suggest support for existing consumption patterns as the percentage of aged people increases. However it is forecast that the ageing baby boomer population will be increasingly concerned with good dietary intake. This would suggest a general increase in vegetable consumption as the median age of the population rises.



Country of Origin food labeling brochure launched

A new consumer brochure on country of origin labelling of food has been launched to help consumers to understand the new labelling requirements for unpackaged fresh and processed fruit, vegetables, nuts and seafood. The brochure *Country of Origin Food Labelling – advice for consumers*, developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), was officially launched by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne, in Adelaide last month.

“From today all unpackaged fresh and processed fruit, vegetables, nuts and seafood must say which country they come from, including Australia,” Mr Pyne said at the launch.

“From December this year, unpackaged fresh and processed pork products must also be labelled with their country of origin, and the changes to packaged foods must be completed by December 2007.

“The new country of origin labelling standard was agreed to by the Australia

and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council in October 2005. Time has been allowed for food manufacturers and retailers to bring in the new labelling. In March 2006 I launched a guide to the new labelling standard to help business and enforcement agencies understand the requirements. The new consumer brochure adds to the package of measures to help consumers make informed choices.

“If consumers have a complaint about country of origin labelling, I suggest that they raise the issue directly with the retailer or manufacturer of the food in question. Consumers can also contact their local, state, or territory health authority if they think there is a problem with a specific food or a complaint about a breach of a food standard or food safety issue,” Christopher said.

The changes will only apply to Australia.

The brochure *Country of Origin Food Labelling – advice for consumers* is available on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au ■

Industry pleased with retailer compliance

Following the introduction of new country of origin labelling laws, the vegetable industry is pleased to acknowledge the efforts of major retailers to comply with the new regulations.

Under the new rules, unpackaged fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, nuts, seafood, fresh pork and pork products must carry a declaration on a label or a sign near the food that states the country of origin, while packaged food must carry a separate statement identifying the country where the food was produced, made or packaged. The new country of origin labelling standard for packaged food will be phased in over a two-year period, giving food manufacturers time to make the necessary labelling changes.

“It is pleasing to see that the retailers are making the effort to comply with the new FSANZ regulations with respect to unpackaged produce,” Michael Badcock, AUSVEG Chairman said. “We look forward to seeing a similar response from manufacturers as they implement the necessary changes to packaged produce.” ■

Vegetable industry recognises excellence

Recipients of awards at the inaugural Australian Vegetable Industry Awards.
L-R: Figaro Natoli, Matt Ryan, Kate Adamson, Elizabeth Minchinton and David de Paoli.



The Australian vegetable industry has honoured the efforts of five individuals at the inaugural Vegetable Industry Awards for Excellence in Brisbane in May.

The awards, which were run to coincide with the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, recognised the contributions of individuals in five key categories: Research, Media, Business Excellence, Young Grower Award, and the AUSVEG Chairman's Award.

The Researcher Award for Excellence was awarded to Dr Elizabeth Minchinton of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for her ongoing contribution to vegetable research in the field of plant pathology.

Kate Adamson of *The Weekly Times* took out the Media Award on the evening, following her dedicated coverage of the Fair Dinkum Food campaign and tractor rally throughout 2005.

The Grower Business Excellence Award was won by David De Paoli of Austchilli in Queensland. Recognising the need for a unique approach to business, David, who is also the Chairman of the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, was congratulated on his ongoing commitment to innovative technology, which has seen his business go from strength to strength.

Tasmanian grower Matt Ryan's contribution to the Fair Dinkum Foods campaign saw him receive the Young Grower Award on the night, recognising not only his personal efforts, but also acknowledging the importance of encouraging young farmers to enter the industry despite the climate of change.

Finally the AUSVEG Chairman's award was presented to Figaro Natoli of Western Australia, whose dedication to the vegetable industry over the last 30 years has helped shape the industry. Presented by AUSVEG Chairman Michael Badcock, the award acknowledged Figaro's ongoing leadership and passion, which have enabled him to play key role at both a state and national level.

The recipients of the 2006 Vegetable Industry Awards for Excellence were selected unanimously by the members of the AUSVEG Board after lengthy deliberation. Future awards will be open to public nomination, with eligibility criteria for nominations to be distributed in the near future. ■

New environmental guidelines for horticulture

Australia's horticulture producers now have a set of national guidelines to help maintain profitability by introducing sound environmental and natural resource management practices.



L-R: Horticulture Australia Ltd chair Nigel Steele Scott, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Sussan Ley, TQA managing director Jane Lovell and Horticulture Australia Council chair Stuart Swadding with a copy of the Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture.

The new Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture were launched in June at a function near Shepparton, Victoria, by the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Sussan Ley.

The 158-page publication represents more than two years work.

"The guidelines will make a significant contribution to the Australian environment and the profitability of our horticulture industries," Sussan said. "Through them, growers have a voluntary guide to good practices and expectations for environmental management.

"The guidelines explain how to tackle environmental assurance in eight key management areas — land and soil, water, nutrients, biodiversity, air, noise, waste and

energy. They will also assure our producers that they are running sustainable enterprises.

"And domestic and overseas consumers will know they are buying clean-and-green produce, because the guidelines include a common sense checklist that enables growers to monitor their progress.

"The 158-page publication represents more than two years work, involving government agencies, industry groups, growers and technical advisers working with existing assurance and environmental management programs.

"The credit for developing the guidelines goes to Horticulture Australia - produced under the industry's national Horticulture for Tomorrow Environmental Assurance Project.

"The \$8.7 million Pathways to Industry Environmental Management Systems Program — part of the Australian

Government's Natural Heritage Trust — assisted with a funding partnership.

"Since the release of the guidelines in draft form in November 2004, Horticulture for Tomorrow has worked with all sectors of the industry to test and fine-tune them.

"Last year, 196 growers, and about 40 industry representatives and technical experts from enterprises across Australia, reviewed and tested the guidelines," Sussan said.

Copies of the Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture are available by calling HAL on (02) 8295 2300, fax Alison Turnbull at HAL on (02) 8295 2399, or email horticulturefortomorrow@horticulture.com.au

Further information is available at www.horticulturefortomorrow.com.au ■

\$650,000 boost for Australian agribusiness

A machine that automatically plants lettuce seedlings at high density is just one innovative idea which has received funding for development through the Australian government's New Industries Development Program.

Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said seven Australian agribusinesses will share in \$650,000 supporting them to turn their creative ideas into commercial realities.

The Minister said the government was dedicated to assisting businesses in the agricultural, processed food, fisheries and forestry industries to build on innovative business ideas and opportunities.

"The funding provides enterprising Australian companies with up to \$120,000, to commercialise new products, services and technologies, and to attend a business readiness workshop," he said.

The seven successful businesses are:

- **Sunny Ridge Epicure**, Main Ridge in Victoria, will produce a unique range of strawberry wines and liqueurs
- **Transplant Systems Pty Ltd**, Berwick in Victoria, will commercialise a machine that automatically plants lettuce seedlings at a high density
- **Gebert Industries Pty Ltd** (Inland Sales & Service), Merredin in WA, will commercialise a new, high-tech mobile grain-cleaner/seed-grader
- **All About Shipping**, Rosanna in Victoria, will commercialise a new desiccant called 'maxisorb'
- **Australian Solar**, Emu in Victoria, will commercialise an off-the-shelf, hybrid wind/solar regulator for small to medium sized applications
- **Germplasm Stock Australia Pty Ltd**, Oakbank in South Australia, will commercially release 'clean vines' — a world's first, 'clean' grape vine, and
- **S&R Enterprises (SA) Pty Ltd**, Penola in South Australia, will commercialise an innovative new petiole remover for grape growers.

More farmers part of the 2006 Agricultural Census than previously

More farmers will take part in the 2006 Agricultural Census, to be launched later this month, than ever before says the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Around 160,000 genuine farm businesses are expected to be confirmed to be operating as at the 30 June 2006 as a result of its five-yearly agricultural census. This is a significant increase on currently available estimates of farm numbers, which put the number at about 130,000.

This increase is the result of the ABS using the Australian Business Register as the population frame used to identify farm businesses which has identified a significant number of mainly smaller businesses which have previously slipped through the net.

According to Gemma Van Halderen, head of the ABS's Agriculture Program, greater coverage by the Agricultural Census is vital to understanding the progress and future prospects of all agricultural industries and their products, as well as their farm practices.

"Better representation of businesses involved in agriculture will provide a huge

improvement in the usefulness of agricultural census statistics to industry groups and government policy makers," Gemma said.

"Industries consisting of many smaller farms, such as horticulture and beef cattle stand to benefit most from this increase in coverage," she said.

The 2006 Agricultural Census was officially launched on 19 June in Canberra with a keynote speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Sussan Ley MP, who is the Member for Farrer in the Australian Parliament and a beef and wool producer.

The Agricultural Census is a once in five-year opportunity for farmers to contribute to information about the ir sector. All businesses that produce agricultural commodities, including meat, grain, vegetables, flowers, and even honey, are included in the census. ■



Consumers believe fresh is best

Consumers around the world believe that foods which are fresh and unprocessed are less likely to result in weight gain, according to a recent study.

The research, conducted by ACNielsen, linked consumer perceptions of unhealthy eating and obesity with increased consumption of take-away foods.

Consumers who participated in the study indicated that out-of-home eating and drinking were an essential part of modern life as people lose the skills or inclination to cook at home on a regular basis. However, there was a perception amongst study participants that food bought outside the home was unhealthy, and this perception was likely to limit growth in the industry. Generally, health concerns, along with cost, were the two most common barriers to growth in frequency of out-of-home eating and drinking. ■

\$2 million for regional food processing

Australian food processors will share in \$2 million to encourage value-adding of food in rural and regional areas.

Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Peter McGauran announced funding that will invest in the future of our processed food industry, creating employment in regional areas, and contributing to the long-term viability of our rural and regional communities.

"Regional food producers make a major contribution to the Australian economy," Minister McGauran said.

"40 per cent of all food processing in Australia takes place in regional areas. The Food Processing in Regional Australia Program (FPRAP) supports these producers to make sure their presence in rural Australia continues."

The Minister said it is important that local businesses continue to meet the needs of

consumers, and it is encouraging to see local businesses planning for the future.

"FPRAP encourages value-adding to take place before produce leaves rural and regional areas, strengthening local infrastructure and support networks," he said.

"Individuals, groups of producers and small to medium-sized food processing businesses are eligible for up to \$200,000 for projects that encourage food processing, set up regional networks and establish market contacts."

The next funding round is now open, closing on 31 August 2006. Changes to the geographic eligibility guidelines were also announced.

"Under the new guidelines, small-to-medium sized food processing businesses across Australia are eligible to apply," he said. "The previous classification excluded some inner-regional agribusinesses from applying. ■

New South Wales

The 2006 Horticulture AGM will take place on Monday 17 July at the Sydney Showground Main Arena RAS Olympic Park in the Charley room from 9.00am to 5.00pm (AGM commences at 1.00pm). Entry is via President's Plaza, Grand Parade and free parking is available in Area P6-F on Australia Ave.

The Conference will be opened by the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Sussan Ley, and a number of interesting speakers will speak on topics relating to the theme of 'Confronting the Challenge of Globalisation'. Speakers include Ian Pavey, Business Manager Fresh Produce, Coles Supermarkets, David Minnis, Australian Horticultural Exporters Association and Brad Latham, CEO, Sydney Markets. All members and their guests are welcome to attend, please contact Luke Jewell on (02) 8251 1885, to confirm your attendance.

The NSW Horticulture Industries Dinner which is organised by Alison Anderson (NSW Vegetable Industry Development Officer), Frances Vella (NSW Farmers' Regional Manager), Leigh James (NSW DPI) and Tally Matthews (Ace Ohlsson) will be held at Dockside Darling Harbour on Saturday the 15 July from 6.30pm til midnight. The previous dinner attracted over 300 guests from across the industry in NSW including the AUSVEG Board and CEO. The dinner is an excellent initiative and Alison Anderson (along with the rest of the team) should be commended for her efforts in uniting what can be a very fragmented industry in NSW.

The National Minor Use Project Coordinator Peter Dal Santo deserves a clap for his perseverance in ensuring hydroponic lettuce growers were able to gain legal access to Confidor through a specific permit which gave them MRL and use rate data for hydro lettuce. Sydney has the largest concentration of NFT lettuce growers in the nation and the onset of lettuce aphid set growers on their heels, especially when they realised they did not have full access to all the tools to manage the pest.

Luke Jewell
Senior Policy Analyst
NSW Farmers Association

Growing
the Business
of Farming | **NSW
Farmers
ASSOCIATION**

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Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: 02 8251 1885

Fax: 02 8251 1752

Contact: Luke Jewell

Tasmania

TFGA Vegetable Council Strategic Plan

The TFGA Vegetable Council announced the appointment of EMBARK to lead the development of a strategic plan for the Tasmanian Vegetable Industry.

As we are all aware, global food purchasing trends are leading to worldwide industry rationalisation and compelling local industries to provide either a cost or product point of difference, to remain competitive.

The Tasmanian Vegetable Processing Industry is particularly vulnerable to these impacts.

To address this situation, TFGA Vegetable Council identified a need for an industry-wide strategic plan to provide a focus and framework for the industry to continue to be internationally competitive.

Mr Euan Laird, who is Managing Director of EMBARK will be leading the project. Euan has good industry knowledge and experience, and was instrumental in initiating the Industry Partnerships Program as former CEO of AUSVEG Ltd.

The project is jointly funded by TFGA Vegetable Council and State Government Department of Economic Development.

TFGA Vegetable Industry Forum

TFGA Vegetable Council will be presenting a Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Forum on 9 August 2006. The Forum will be held at Ulverstone, and will focus on the vegetable industry in Tasmania from "Now to the Future".

Following from the successful Vegetable Industry Conference hosted by AUSVEG Ltd in Brisbane, and the ABARE 2006 Outlook Conference in Canberra, the concept of a snapshot of such national conferences being presented to local growers has provided the base for the Tasmanian Forum.

Key speakers will give presentations from various points in the value chain, and include such topics as, innovation, marketing, potential export opportunities, the Tasmanian Vegetable Industry strategic plan, and local and national industry survey results.

Mr Albert Wada, from Idaho, USA and chairman of the United Potato Growers of America, will give an informative paper on corporate co-operative strategies and actions.

World Potato Congress 2006

Tasmania will be well represented at the upcoming World Potato Congress being held in Boise, Idaho in the USA.

TFGA Potato Council has put together a tour that will take fifteen delegates to six states of America prior to and after the Congress.

The tour will enable the party of travellers who represent various points of the value chain, to look at every aspect of the potato industry from plant breeding to processing. It will also look at various aspects of the Simplot farming model, as well as extensive field days and demonstrations.

The tour will depart on 15 August and return on 2 September.

Denis Leonard
Executive Officer
TFGA



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Launceston TAS 7250

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Fax: 03 6331 4344

Contact: Denis Leonard

Queensland

Environmental conditions in Queensland have played a significant role in the volume and quality of produce coming out of QLD. There have been some early winter frosts which have slowed production and prematurely ended the season. This combined with the water shortages in the Lockyer Valley and Darling Downs and continued labour shortages have meant that winter plantings have fallen slightly.

On a positive note, the Bundaberg vegetable growers are very proud to have lead the way in collaboration with all of industry, researchers and government with the phase out of Methyl Bromide. David De Paoli went to Washington DC last month to receive the Global Ozone Protection Award from the US EPA. This is a fantastic achievement and should be publicised to the general public to demonstrate that Australian growers are leading the way globally, in clean green vegetable production and that consumers should pay a premium for Australian grown produce, due to this fact.

Kate Dunn started as the QLD / NT Vegetable IDO on the 10 July. Kate has come from the beef industry and is looking forward to joining the vegetable industry at this exciting time.

Following from the national budget announcements the current economic climate in Queensland is positive for farm business people with Queensland's growth forecast to strengthen in 2006/07 and exceed the Australian growth rate.

Jan Davis
CEO
Growcom



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Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006
Tel: 07 3620 3844
Fax: 07 3620 3880
Contact: Jan Davis

South Australia

The SA Horticulture Industry Answer!

Virginia Horticulture Centre (VHC) continues to provide a huge array of services to producers, packers, processors and related businesses in the Horticulture industry in South Australia.

Members of the VHC have the opportunity to see, touch, feel, learn and network in areas covering all facets of our ever growing industry.

The VHC encompasses a service centre, with training and conference facilities, a community kitchen, a greenhouse facility and a packaging/ processing facility (currently under construction).

Members are able to access services from production through to post harvest to grow their business. Member services include: natural resource management strategy design, water recycling, plastics recycling, integrated pest management, soil and plant health, revegetation design, technology transfer, education and training (accredited and non-accredited), value adding assistance in packaging, processing, labelling, design, branding, product development, and marketing, desktop publishing, financial management, community development, project management and other related business services.

These services are available to the entire horticulture industry and producers, packers, processors of vegetables and fruit and related businesses are encouraged to contact the VHC on 08 8282 9200.

For more information contact:
Victoria Andrew 08 8282 9200 or
0438 807 255.

Mike Redmond
General Manager
Virginia Horticulture Centre



VIRGINIA
HORTICULTURE CENTRE
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

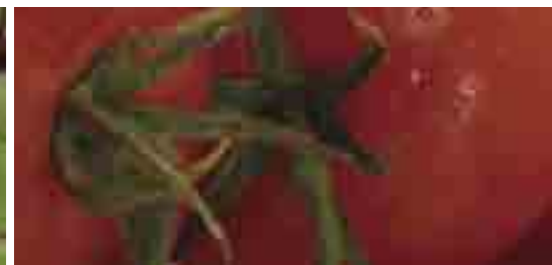
Address: Old Port Wakefield Road
Virginia SA 5120

Tel: 08 8282 9200
Fax: 08 8380 8950
Contact: Michael Redmond



South Australian Farmers Federation
Address: 3rd floor, 122 Frome St
Adelaide SA 5000

Tel: 08 8232 5555
Fax: 08 8232 1311
Contact: John Mundy



Victoria

The combination of winter's colder weather, lack of substantial rain in several growing areas and school holidays allows some vegetable growers the opportunity to leave the farm and enjoy a short family holiday.

Attendance at conferences and mixing with other industry representatives is always rewarding. I attended the National Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane in May, which provided a wide range of informative speakers and workshop sessions. The support from industry suppliers was excellent in the exhibitor sections and it was pleasing that industry recognition awards were presented to Kate Adamson of The Weekly Times in Victoria and Elizabeth Minchinton of Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Knoxfield.

The interest shown by delegates was most encouraging, however the vegetable industry should not become carried away by this achievement and consider the present financial climate of the fruit and vegetable industry and prepare for future biennial national conferences, not annual.

The one day Produce Marketing Australia (PMA) seminar held in Sydney in June gathered together industry representatives to hear PMA counterparts from America involved in fresh produce supply chain for supermarkets and fast food outlets. There was an interesting panel session involving Australian fresh produce producers, central market suppliers to the retailers and food service organisations.

The 2007 National Vegetable Expo Committee has already commenced planning the next Expo, to be held at the Gilbert Chandler Complex, Sneydes Road, Werribee, on Thursday 3 and Friday 4 May 2007 in conjunction with the Gordon Institute of TAFE Werribee Campus and the VGA. The 2005 Expo event provided an excellent exhibitors display of horticultural products and services to the vegetable industry, with spectacular displays of new vegetable varieties provided by seed companies in the allocated trial plots. This biennial event is a major drawcard for vegetable growers and plant nursery operators to assemble and enjoy the informal nature of discussion and demonstration.

This is the time of year when annual membership renewal notices are being distributed, with invitations to all Victorian vegetable levy payers who have not joined to support the VGA.

VGA representation is retained on several industry committees, providing positive vegetable grower input. Our affiliation with the Victorian Farmers Federation Horticultural Group provides members with access to labour and industrial relations information, with rural policy and Government lobbying on issues affecting the vegetable industry.

Development of the Victorian vegetable industry is an important VGA project, with the involvement of our Industry Development Officer Patrick Ulloa to assist all Victorian vegetable growers in the development and viability of vegetable production.

The VGA Executive Committee has maintained its involvement and representation with the Melbourne Market Growers Advisory Committee, Strategic Alliance Group, VFF Horticultural Group and the National Vegetable Expo Committee.

The formation of a strategic alliance group at the Melbourne Markets has provided a rare situation where all market users have a one-voice approach to State Government and Melbourne Market Authority.

All Victorian Vegetable Growers are invited to renew their membership and encourage any non-member actively involved in vegetables production to join the VGA.

Tony Imeson
Executive officer
VGA



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Fax: 03 9687 4723

Contact: Tony Imeson

Western Australia

Jim Turley
Executive Officer
Vegetables WA



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103 Outram St, West Perth WA 6005

Tel: 08 9481 0834

Fax: 08 9481 0024

Contact: Jim Turley



Calendar of events

JULY 2006

July

Plant Breeder's Rights, Contracts, End Point Royalties and Commercialisation: Issues for the Horticulture Industries

Various locations around Australia.

A series of free seminars on intellectual property issues for growers, plant breeders and others involved in the horticulture industries will be held in various districts throughout 2006. These seminars will cover topics such as, Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR), End Point Royalties, Farm saved propagating material (e.g. seed, cuttings etc), Grower Agreements and Closed Loop Contracts.

For more information or to find out if a seminar is being held in your area, visit:

Website:

www.horticulture.com.au/news/

13 July

Potato 2006

Ulverstone, Tasmania.

Potato industry forum organised by Simplot Australia focusing on the business of potato production.

15 July

NSW Horticultural Industries Dinner Sydney.

For more information, contact:
Alison Anderson.

Tel: 02 9746 1865 or 0409 383 003

Email: alison.anderson@bigpond.com

17 July

TFGA Vegetable Council Meeting

25 July

Tasmanian Agricultural Research and Advisory Committee's Annual 'Research and Development Day'

Ulverstone, Tasmania.

26 July

TFGA Vegetable Industry Forum

Ulverstone, Tasmania.

27-28 July

TFGA Annual Conference

Launceston, Tasmania.

AUGUST 2006

2-3 August

Horticulture New Zealand's 1st Annual Conference

Sky City Convention Centre, Auckland
New Zealand.

In conjunction with this conference, the annual conferences of the Fresh Vegetable, Potato, Fresh Tomato and Process Vegetables Product Groups will be held at the same venue on 4 August.

For more information:

Website: www.hortnz.co.nz

13 – 19 August

27th International Horticultural Congress and Exhibition (IHC 2006)

Seoul, Republic of Korea.

For more information:

Website: www.ihc2006.org

28 August - 2 September

5th International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops

Mildura, VIC, Australia.

For more information:

Email:

Irrigation.Symposium@dpi.vic.gov.au

Website: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/irrigationsymposium

SEPTEMBER 2006

3 - 6 September 2006

4th Australasian Soilborne Diseases Symposium

Queenstown, New Zealand.

The 4th Australasian Soilborne Diseases Symposium provides a forum for communication and knowledge transfer relating to all aspects of plant pathology and the soil.

For more information:

Website: www.asds2006.org.nz

24 - 26 September 2006

Southern Hemisphere Congress

Cape Town, South Africa.

The Southern Hemisphere Congress, the leading annual conference and exhibition event for the Southern Hemisphere's fresh fruit and vegetable industry.

For more information:

Email:

john@producemarketing.com.au

Website: www.shcongress.com

OCTOBER 2006

20 - 24 October 2006

Fresh Summit, PMA's International Convention and Exposition

San Diego, USA.

Fresh Summit is the world's largest fresh fruit and vegetable event. Network with other produce industry leaders, see new products, strengthen relationships with current suppliers, gather information for future purchasing decisions, and build your business.

For more information:

Website: www.pma.com

22 - 26 October 2006

SIAL France 2006

Paris, France.

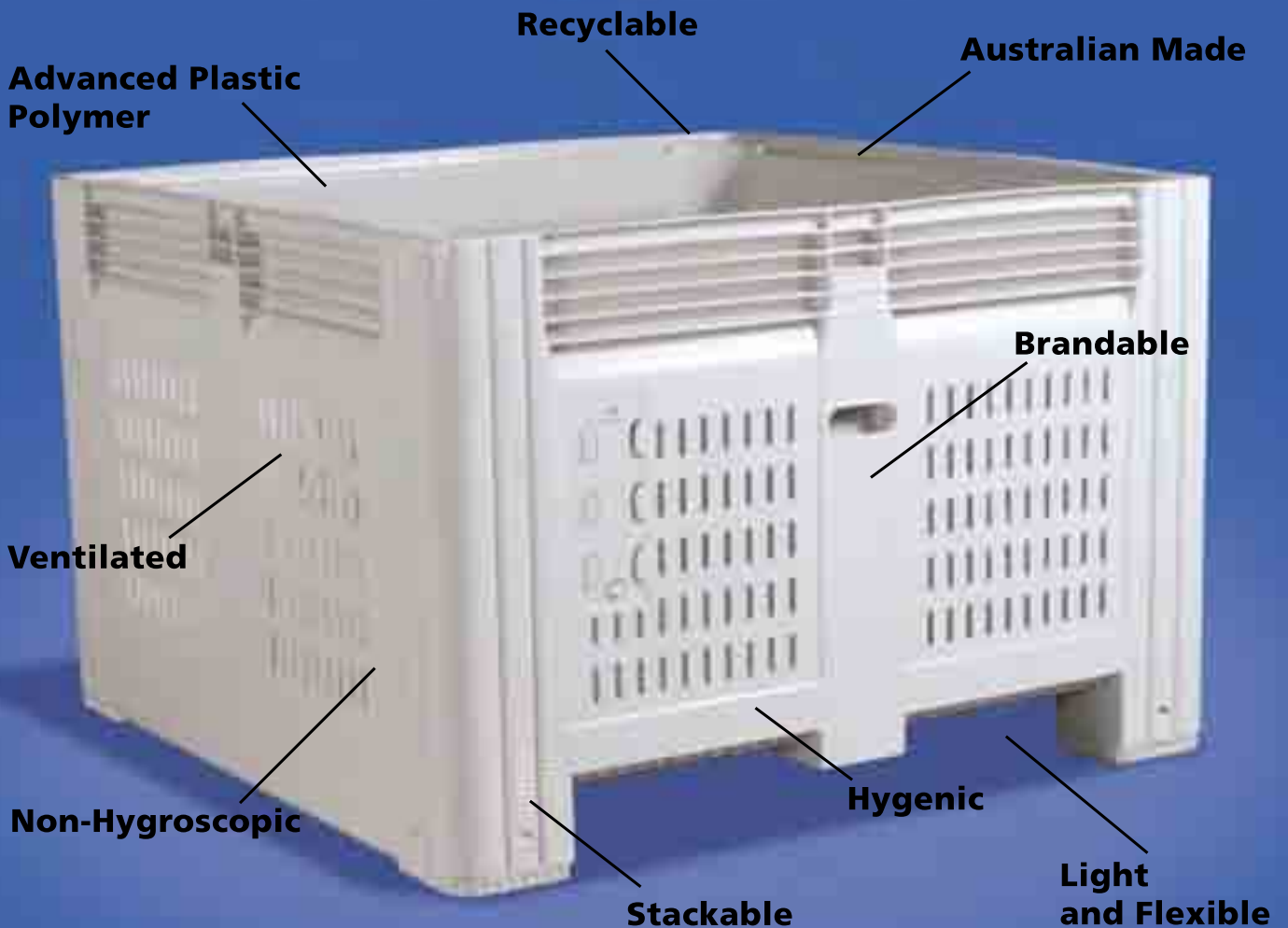
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