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Jim Trandos: Giving back to industry



New AUSVEG Board announced

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A word from the AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

The vegetable industry has declared that 'vegetables are sick of being a side dish' and publicly challenged the meat industry last month during the launch of the 'Vegetables Claim Centre Plate Campaign' by The Federal Agriculture Minister, The Hon Peter McGauran at the Queen Victoria Markets.

This event featured celebrity cook Georgina Damm of Damm Fine Foods and is the beginning of a wide range of activities that are aimed keeping the vegetable industry at front of mind, (or the 'centre of the plate'). The campaign leads up to our industry conference in Sydney from 29 May to 1 June.

Also as part of the 'Centre Plate Campaign' The Weekly Times newspaper in Victoria in conjunction with AUSVEG has been running a consumer competition to find Australia's Best Salads. Judging of over 200 entries is soon to take place, and the

results will be published in the next edition of Vegetables Australia.

Support for the Vegetable Industry Conference continues to grow and I welcome Michael Luscombe, Woolworths CEO as one of our key note speakers. And The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) have joined Bayer CropScience as a Platinum sponsor. The registration brochure for our conference is available with this edition of the magazine or from the official conference website

www.vegieconf.com.au. This really is an event not to be missed.

Michael Badcock
AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

From the Editor



There's no denying the gravity of drought conditions across the country, forcing it to become one of the top issues on the political agenda at both state and national levels. And the impact on agricultural businesses and their surrounding rural communities is substantial.

As a result, readers of *Vegetables Australia* can expect a significant amount of coverage on this topic as various parties try to find solutions to the problem, or attempt to ease the pain for farmers nationwide.

This issue we explore some water-saving ideas (p.36), as well as including information which may assist drought-affected growers.

We also introduce you to the recently elected AUSVEG Board of Directors (p.12), as well as profiling new Board member

Jim Trandos, a grower from Western Australia. (p8)

Those of you confused by Intellectual Property (IP) issues may be interested in an article explaining IP terminology with specific reference to horticulture (p.26), and, as usual, we showcase some of the research projects funded through the National Vegetable Levy.

Youna Angevin-Castro
Editor, Vegetables Australia

'vegetables claim centre plate'



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Giving back to



Carolyn Walker speaks to Western Australian grower and new AUSVEG director, Jim Trandos.



In an era where people are so busy working and can't find time to give to committees or similar groups, it's comforting to know that there are still individuals who are prepared to stand up and take the reins.

And in cases such as Jim Trandos, it's simply an ideal he's been exposed to in his family life, complemented and nurtured by an interesting career.

Jim is one of the newest board members of AUSVEG, representing Western Australian vegetable growers.

His family involvement in growing vegetables dates back to 1939, when his grandfather Dimitrios started D Trandos and Sons after arriving in Western Australia from Greece. The business was later run by Dimitrios' sons Nick (Jim's father), Steve and Harry.

"My brother Arthur and I now run the business with my cousin Michael, Steve's son. Harry has three sons who run a hydroponic enterprise on the same site, while Uncle Steve runs the Trandos Chicken Farm that also shares the site," Jim said.

"Our business currently produces sweet corn, beans, broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce. The main farm is situated in Wanneroo, 40 minutes north of Perth. We also run another property in Guilderton, around 80 minutes north of Perth and in the winter season, we move production to various properties in the State's north."

Strong family values underpin Jim's decision to become involved in AUSVEG.

"Dad always represented the family on various committees, including being the previous Chairman of the Australian

industry



Vegetable Growers Federation. I decided that in my time, I had something to offer public life," Jim said.

"As a board member, I want to look at all growers, big and small, look after regional areas and families so that everyone gets a fair share and an equal hearing."

"After being a commodity group member for about a year, I was asked to run as a board member to represent the State. As D Trandos and Sons supplies a cross section of the industry, including supermarkets, wholesalers and processors, and the fact we have exported to Japan, I felt I would be able to make a good contribution to AUSVEG.

"In Western Australia, we have a very good organisation – vegetablesWA (formerly the Vegetable Growers' Association) – which does a fantastic job and has representatives in all parts of the State, which is very large.

"As a board member, I want to look at all growers, big and small, look after regional areas and families so that everyone gets a fair share and an equal hearing.

"We have a different industry that has generally been built on long term investments by families. People don't really get into our industry now because it is such a big investment. But we need to look after the small and large producers in these challenging times."

Jim believes the industry has changed the most in the last six to eight years with

the introduction of accreditation and the dominance of the supermarket chains. The threat of imports is huge, and the pressure for water resources is now so excessive it allows an even bigger opportunity for imported products to enter the market.

"Water is proving to be the number one issue for nearly all parts of the agricultural sector," he said.

"I heard an economist on the radio recently who said from a purely economic perspective, it would be cheaper to import vegetables than use our water resources to grow them.

"I think this shows that it's up to our industry to try and hang on and manage the situation as best we can. In Western Australia, our diverse climate allows us to

Continued on next page



Giving back to industry (continued)

have spring and summer conditions all year round. Consequently, in our own business, we have arrangements with people to use properties in Geraldton, Carnarvon and Broome at different times of the year to grow vegetables. I go to Broome because there is water there.

"We may need to tap more into fresh-water, look at what we do, what we can harness and what technology can do for us," he said.

Some of Jim's ideas stem from his time living in California where he worked as a freelance business consultant and was fortunate enough to have worked in a joint

venture for Red Chamber Company, one of the biggest distributors of prawns in the world. "It was very interesting to see how they serviced markets of three hundred million people.

"Our business is continually changing, and because we're dealing with nature, it is difficult to meet with specifications. There's nowhere to send second grade vegetables now, so we need to invent ways to use second grade product," Jim said.

"We also need to look at new and sustainable technology. Companies will have to invest for their long term futures in the industry. In other words 'Those that stay will pay'.

"I'm looking forward to my involvement on the board to try and make an effort to converse with all regions of the industry to resolve these matters."

Jim complemented the board on the recent launch of the "Vegetables Claim Centre Plate" campaign, launched by the Hon Peter McGauran, Federal Minister for Agriculture.

"We have a nation that has a growing obesity problem. We have an obligation to our children to make sure they eat vegetables. People say you can eat too much meat and chicken, but no-one ever says you can eat too many fresh vegetables." ■

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New AUSVEG Board announced

AUSVEG Ltd's new Board of Directors was announced at the 2006 Annual General Meeting held on 10 January, 2007. Michael Badcock retained his position as Chairman, Paul Ziebarth of Growcom was elected Vice Chairman and John Mundy of SAFF was elected Treasurer.

L-R: Luis Gazzola, Paul Ziebarth (Vice Chairman), Geoff Moar, Des Jennings, Jeff McSpedden, Michael Badcock (Chairman), Ian Young, Steven Page, Phillip Beswick, Lisa Maguire (AUSVEG General Manager), David Anderson, John Mundy (Treasurer), John Roach (AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer). Absent: John Brent, Jim Trandos



Four new directors were elected to the board, which comprises six representatives from the vegetable industry and six representatives from the potato industry.

"I would like to thank past directors for their considerable efforts over the last few years and very much look forward to working with the new directors to ensure the organisation meets the need of all growers across Australia," AUSVEG Chairman Michael Badcock said.

"Over the past 12 months the vegetable industry has had to embrace change quickly and it is peak industry organisations such as AUSVEG, that are integral to implementing change strategies," Mike said.

"The next 12 months will be an exciting time for the new board and state representatives to assist industry to move forward in a managed, structured way with a focus on profitability, innovation and collaboration with government and other industry sectors," he added.

Mike Badcock (Chair)

Michael has held many senior roles in agriculture over the past 18 years including Director of AUSVEG since 1994, and Chairman since September 2002.

He has been successfully farming for the past 36 years. Based in Forth, Tasmania he farms 360 acres including cabbage, cauliflower, poppies, potatoes, beans, tulip bulbs, daffodil bulbs, oriental lily bulbs and pyrethrum.

Michael has been instrumental driving the growth of AUSVEG. Under Michael's guidance as chair, AUSVEG employed a Chief Executive Officer, changed its legal entity from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee, and employed staff in key operational areas such as industry development, communications and economics.

Luis Gazzola

Luis is a second generation Victorian vegetable grower who has been involved in the Australian vegetable industry for more than 53 years.

Luis' operation, Gazzola Farms, is a family-run business growing a range of vegetables including, carrots, celery, broccoli, Asian vegetables, lettuce and cos lettuce, supplying both the markets and retailers.

Luis is serving his third term as President of the Victorian Vegetable Growers Association (VGA) and brings to the AUSVEG board a wealth of experience and leadership.

Luis is looking forward to delivering common sense outcomes on national policy issues such as Security Sensitive Chemicals and is determined to ensure that AUSVEG delivers value with growers' levy investments.

Jim Trandos

Jim runs a vegetable growing operation, growing sweet corn, beans, broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce, with his brother and cousin in Wanneroo, Western Australia.

A current Director of vegetablesWA and now AUSVEG, Jim is looking forward to the opportunity to represent the many interests of the Western Australian industry at a national level.

Jim identifies water as being the major issue affecting the industry, and believes that the industry, as a group, can work towards finding workable solutions for growers nationally.

Ian Young

Ian farms with his family at East Sassafras on Tasmania's north west coast where they grow vegetables such as peas, beans, potatoes, carrots, as well medicinal poppies and run livestock. He has been involved in the vegetable industry for over 27 years and is a member of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) Vegetable Council and is Chairman of McCains Beans Commodity and McCains Growers Group. Ian was appointed to the AUSVEG board in 2002.

Ian is very passionate about the industry and believes that although the future holds lots of uncertainties, he is confident that it will survive and that farmers need to make changes to their approach so they are not solely reliant on one market.

He feels that the future of the industry depends on various stakeholders working together, and believes that AUSVEG, the state bodies and governments are and will continue to work hard to confront the issues facing growers.



Jeff McSpedden

Based south of Bathurst, NSW, Jeff McSpedden has been a vegetable grower for over 35 years, growing sweet corn, cabbage, broccoli and lettuce, as well as running a grazing and cropping enterprise.

Jeff holds positions on the NSW Farmers Horticultural Section committee and the HAL National Water Steering Committee, as well as being Chair of AUSVEG's National Environmental Committee.

Jeff has served on the AUSVEG board for the last six years, and has seen the industry

go through many changes. He is confident that the AUSVEG board will tackle the difficult issues head on for the interests of growers nationally.

John Mundy (Treasurer)

John Mundy is a vegetable grower at Gumeracha in the Adelaide Hills, where he grows cauliflower, broccoli, as well as running a sheep enterprise. He has been a Director of AUSVEG for nine years.

John currently holds the position of Chairman of South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) Horticulture Executive

Committee. Over the years John has also been involved in issues of plant health and biosecurity, offering a grower's perspective to a variety of industry planning committees.

John believes the biggest issues affecting farm profitability are beyond the farm gate and the only way growers are going to have any influence is by working together.

John believes that the vegetable industry is too fragmented and that the real challenge for the AUSVEG board is to bring the industry together and make the hard decisions needed to progress the industry.

Continued on next page

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New AUSVEG Board announced (continued)

John Brent

John Brent has more than 40 years experience in vegetable production and has spent the last 30 years balancing his business life with his work in local government.

His vertically integrated family run business, Bunny Bites Foods, grows a number of crops for both the processing and fresh markets, operating out of Boonah, Southern Queensland.

John has served on a number of boards and is a currently a Board Director of Queensland state horticultural body, Growcom. John brings a diverse skill-set to the AUSVEG board with his background in industry, business and rural leadership.

John is determined to ensure that AUSVEG at a national level is maximising advocacy opportunities and continues to represent the national interest of its state membership.

Des Jennings

Des Jennings is the Chairman of the Victorian Potato Council as well as a member of the HAL Fresh Potato IAC committee and has served in the past as Chairman of Seed Potato Victoria.

He runs a 250 Ha seed potato family farm in Thorpedale which also farms beef, cattle sheepfat and lambs.

Des sees water resourcing as one of the biggest issues facing the potato industry but believes we need to ensure the industry focuses on the big picture rather than just reacting to immediate problems.

He is also keen to see Potato Cyst Nematode pest outbreaks handled on a national basis and has pinpointed compliance as the biggest problem growers face.

Paul Ziebarth (Vice Chairman)

Paul Ziebarth is the Chairman of Growcom in Brisbane, and runs a vertically integrated farming and marketing operation in the Lockyer Valley.

Paul, a fifth generation vegetable farmer, with a strong science and agricultural background is very keen to focus on international

competitiveness and the component of price that gets back to growers.

In addition, he is keen to promote environmental sustainability from the farming and marketing perspectives.

"There are tremendous gains to be made through the adoption and integration of technology. As soon as you mention technology, people think you need to race out and spend a lot of money, when in fact there are often a lot of smaller things that can achieve the same result."

Phillip Beswick

Phillip Beswick runs a contracting, harvesting, and cartage business, and a fertiliser depot with his wife Jane, located at Sisters Creek, Boat Harbour on the Northwest coast of Tasmania.

Phillip is currently Chairman of the Tasmanian Potato Growers Association and the McCain Processed Potatoes Committee.

Like many other growers, Phillip sees water resources and security of water allocations as a critical issue for the industry, but he is also keen to maintain quality of seed varieties available to growers as well as ensuring growers are able to get a fair share of the consumer dollar.

In addition, Phillip would like to see improved availability of up-to-date chemicals, such as new generation pesticides and insecticides.

Steven Page

Steven Page is the Managing Director of Golden Sunrise, an integrated farm enterprise controlling 5000 Ha which grows, washes, packs and processes potatoes.

Steven joined Golden Sunrise in 1999 and has previously worked for Greens General Foods Limited and in the poultry industry.

A major challenge Steven sees for the industry will be maintaining farms as farms, and managing the commercialisation and industrialisation of farming, something he believes the industry is already moving towards.

Steven is keen to ensure the mandatory code of conduct is adopted and further integrated to include grower to retailer and pack house to merchant transactions.

Geoff Moar

Having grown potatoes in the Riverina area, NSW since the late 1960s, Geoff Moar currently supplies both processed and fresh market potatoes to markets and companies such as McCains and Kettle Chips and has seen dramatic changes in the industry.

Currently a member of the Horticultural Committee of NSW Farmers, Geoff is very keen to improve the percentage of the retail dollar that is delivered to the producer.

Geoff is also greatly concerned with the government's attitude to water and associated water property rights, fearing growers may find themselves having difficulty retaining water rights they have already secured.

David Anderson

David Anderson was elected to the AUSVEG board in November 2005. He is a fourth generation potato and vegetable grower, on a property in Baldivis, WA with his family selling fresh and processed potatoes for domestic consumption.

Currently, David is the Chairman of vegetablesWA and on the State Executive of the Potato Growers Association.

A key focus for David is to make the industry more sustainable, through water security, ensuring the right to farm and easing the bureaucratic burden for growers, such as streamlining the introduction of environmental management systems for production and safe quality food standards

David is also keen to improve growers' share of the retail dollar and also promote a healthy, safe, quality health food message to the general public of Australia, as he believes more can be done to present a healthy focus on vegetables at a time when obesity and diabetes are becoming more of a national focus. ■

Targeting Market Development: Vegetable Industry Export Network

The Vegetable Industry Export Network met in February for a second time, agreeing to develop a comprehensive business plan that will shape the Network's future work.

The Vegetable Industry Export Network has continued its focus on understanding China as a competitor and potential market opportunity.

The Export Network business plan will consider a range of activities across a number of the foundation projects, including investing in market development, undertaking global comparative analyses as well as enhancing industry information and decision support for the Australian vegetable industry.

The network consists of businesses that are already growing, packing and exporting vegetables successfully and combines their expertise to set an investment agenda.

It is anticipated that these investments will identify barriers to exports, set priorities for export market opportunities as well as identify opportunities for growth.

The business plan will be built on a framework that enables both projects and investments to be undertaken in a targeted manner. The steps proposed in the business plan development process include researching stakeholder needs, undertaking

a thorough analysis of the current situation and determining any gaps which may exist.

A desktop marketing audit has commenced to draw together existing information on vegetable production and international trade by China and Australia. The report will be used as one source of information to assist formulation of the business plan.

A draft of the business plan will be presented to the Export Network by the end of May 2007.

Chairman of the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group, Richard Bovill, says the 'China project' will help the industry gain a better understanding of the potential export opportunities that may be available and the competitive threats that China presents to the Australian vegetable industry in both our domestic and export markets.

"Undoubtedly, China is a huge and growing market and we need to know more about it. The study being conducted will outline what current barriers exist for entry into Chinese markets as well as provide information to exporters as they make important business decisions.

"The information gained will form a 'blueprint' for Australian vegetable exporters as they look at the merits of coordinated approaches to develop existing markets and access new markets.

"Exporters and the industry will use the processes and collaborative approaches being developed in the China Project to explore the development of other markets in the future," Richard said.

Richard said the Export Network provides a mechanism for exporters and industry to focus collective efforts in order to compete and succeed in international markets.

The Export Network provides a sharp commercial focus for increasing exports of Australian vegetables and supporting the achievement of Vegvision 2020, the industry wide strategic plan which has set the target of doubling the 2006 value of fresh, processed and packages vegetables by 2020.

Members of the Export Network include; Nigel Carey (Webster fresh), David DePaoli (Austchilli), Phillip Jauncey (Matilda Fresh Foods), Dene Lampard (Center West Exports), Sean Limbrey (Momack), Neil Armstrong (Harvest Moon), and Nick Tana (Sumich Group). ■



For more information: about the work of the AVIDG and Vegvision 2020, please visit www.avidgroup.net.au.

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Refined Vegetable Levy R&D Process

Excellent progress has been made to implement changes to the processes and structures which support the National Vegetable Levy investment in Research and Development (R&D). The changes stem from a review of the vegetable levy R&D process which has an aim to put in place the most appropriate structure and processes for the industry to achieve the objectives of VegVision 2020, the vegetable industry strategic plan.



As detailed in the January 2007 edition of Vegetables Australia, identification of what changes are required followed exhaustive consultation with levy payers across Australia in the second half of 2006. The most significant change was a consensus by levy payers to replace the six state-based Product Groups with five expertise-based Advisory Groups which reflect the five strategic pillars of VegVision 2020.

A sub-committee of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has responsibility for managing the review. Members of the sub-committee comprise Kent West, John Said and Paul Gazzola.

The new Advisory Group structure and Vegetable IAC are to be formed in May 2007 in time to take carriage of the 2008/09 vegetable levy R&D process. An important first activity will be an induction program for all Advisory Group members scheduled for June 2007.

Advisory Groups

Each of the Advisory Groups will comprise vegetable levy payers and specialists, with a majority of levy payers on each Advisory Group. Vegetable levy payers were provided the opportunity to nominate for one of the 21 grower positions on the Advisory Groups throughout February. Interviews of short-listed growers by a specially convened panel will be conducted during April with placements confirmed in May.

Nomination for specialist positions

The process for selecting members for the thirteen specialist positions is as follows:

- A pool of potential candidates is being identified with assistance from state industry organisations and Industry Development Officers
- Likely candidates will be invited to nominate for specific specialist positions
- The Vegetable IAC sub committee to confirm appointments.

Vegetable industry stakeholders who wish to nominate themselves or another person for the specialist positions are encouraged to do so. Contact should be made with the Chair of the Vegetable IAC through AUSVEG Industry Development Manager Ross Ord email: ross.ord@ausveg.com.au The process for identifying specialist members for each Advisory Group is to be finalised by end April 2007.

Taking Shape

The 21 specialist positions

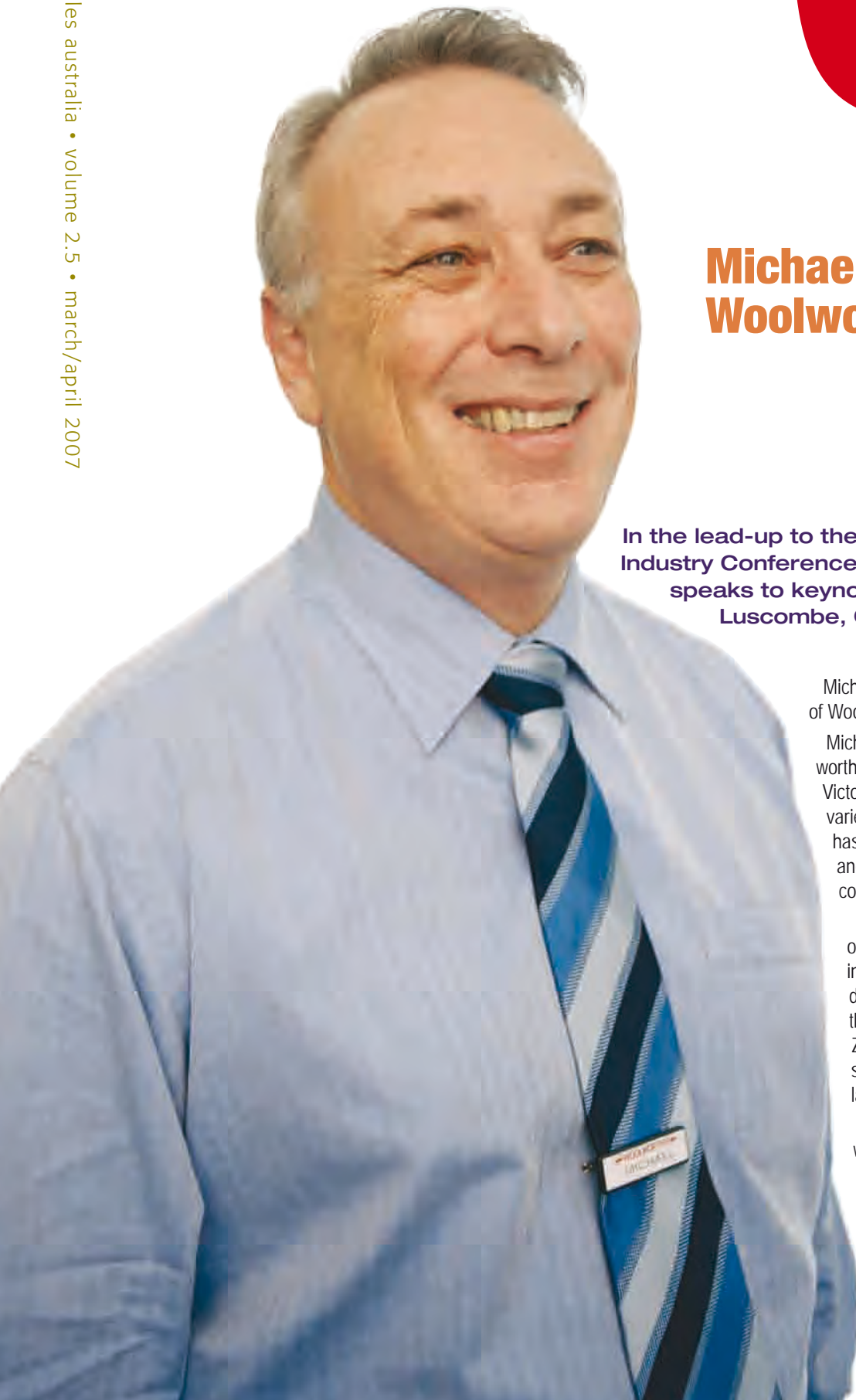
The focus of each Advisory Group (AG) and the specialist positions for each are as follows:

Advisory Group	Focus	Specialist Positions
Consumers AG (4 growers, 3 specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop industry's understanding of domestic and international consumer trends in health and consumption Education consumers about health benefits of vegetable products Provide consumer driven direction to R&D investment back down the supply chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x independent retailer 1x consumer specialist from major retailer 1x consumer specialist from food service
Market Development AG (4 growers, 3 specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop market opportunities for vegetable products through food service retail channels New product development/innovation Supply chain efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x food service company product development specialist 1 x retailer product development specialist 1 x representative - National Food Industry Strategy
Leadership & People Development AG (4 growers, 2 specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving skills of industry workers Accessing labour for industry Development of industry leaders Information and technology transfer Industry and business succession planning Full spectrum of skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x Agri-Food Industry Skills Council (Rural Standing Cttee) 1 x training provider delivery services to rural/vegetable sector
Information & Technology Development & Dissemination AG (3 growers, 2 specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and confirm application of frontier technology (in information) Development and maintenance of industry participant database (whole of chain) Develop systems to improve market intelligence, and dissemination of R&D outcomes Farm management systems Precision agriculture Market information systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x IT specialist with ability to communicate in plain English 1 x service provider communications specialist (eg CSIRO)
Production AG (Independent Chair, 6 growers, 3 specialists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International competitiveness on costs of production and quality of product Mechanisation and automation (labour saving technology) Supply chain efficiency Productivity Sundry production issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x fresh cut processor 1 x vegetable processor representative 1 x supply chain efficiency expert

Further information

Additional information on the revised vegetable levy R&D process and structure, and the nomination process for the specialist positions can be obtained from the IAC sub-committee (Chair Kent West westfarms@bigpond.net.au).

As well, vegetable industry associations in each state and Industry Development Officers will be able to assist.



Q & A

Michael Luscombe, Woolworths CEO

In the lead-up to the 2007 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, Youna Angevin-Castro speaks to keynote speaker, Michael Luscombe, CEO of Woolworths Limited.

Michael Luscombe was appointed CEO of Woolworths in October 2006.

Michael began his career with Woolworths in 1978 as a graduate trainee in Victoria. Since then, he has worked in a variety of roles with the company, and has accumulated a vast knowledge and understanding of all facets of the company's business.

In 2004, Michael took on the job of Director of Supermarkets, heading up the company's largest trading division. During his tenure, he oversaw the complex integration of 150 New Zealand supermarkets and 22 Action stores, acquired as part of the Foodland demerger.

In May 2006 the Board of Woolworths Limited announced that Michael was to become Chief Operating Officer and CEO-elect, succeeding Roger Corbett as the head of Australia's leading retail organisation.

1. What do you hope to achieve in your new role as CEO of Woolworths Limited?

Having been with the company for nearly 30 years, I have been closely involved in the strategies and initiatives that have contributed to our present success. My job is to continue to maintain the momentum of these strategies - to look after the best interests of our business, our people, our suppliers and our customers.

2. What do you believe are some of the key contributors to a successful relationship between growers and retailers such as Woolworths?

Woolworths is not a manufacturer, a producer or a farmer – we retail the products that others grow and create. Without our suppliers, we would have nothing to sell and unless those suppliers are viable, profitable and able to invest in their business through technology and innovation, then quite simply, we wouldn't have a business. We have relationships with growers going back many decades and we always try to take a long term view of our partnership with them and to stand by them through good times and bad. You can't build those sorts of relationships without mutual trust, integrity and a commitment to common goals.

3. In your opinion, what can industry do to improve processes across the supply chain?

At the end of the day we are all here to serve the needs of customers and we need to stay very focused on their changing demands. Delivering the best quality and freshest produce into stores as efficiently as possible is a vital component of this. All our processes, for Woolworths and for growers, need to be geared towards this objective.

4. Retailers such as Woolworths have the privileged position of being in direct contact with consumers - what can you tell growers about your consumers that would help them to improve their business?

“Be conscious of what the end customer wants.”

How long do you have!? Every customer is unique and so is every shopping experience. However certain commonalities tend to resonate with most customers - they want the right product choices for them; they sometimes want to discover something new and exciting; they want the shopping trip to be easy and convenient with good service; they want value for money; and they want to trust in the quality and integrity of the brands and products that they buy. Ultimately each link in the supply chain needs to be conscious of what the end customer wants, because they are the driver.

5. Your recent drought relief fundraiser was a resounding success – why do you believe the plight of farmers and rural communities captured the attention of Australians nationally?

Our intention was to raise awareness of the issues facing rural communities and we were overwhelmed by the response from the public. It certainly seemed to strike a chord, particularly with young people in metro areas, which was very heartening to see. Most Aussies have some sense of connection to the land, either through parents, grandparents or other relatives who live in the country, or simply from their own travels. The Drought Action Day served to remind us all of the importance of our

rural heritage and we are looking forward to continuing our commitment to the long term sustainability of those communities.

6. Does Woolworths have any innovative plans for their packaged and fresh vegetable product lines in the near future?

Certainly the Freshcuts range is a significant area of growth, particularly as more and more customers seek convenient meal solutions. The recent launch of Fresh Bites - ready to eat mixed salad vegetables in a lunchbox style pack - has been hugely popular and clearly meets a demand for healthy, nutritious snackfood. We also want to continue to work with Australian growers on import replacement programmes, which we've had great success with. For example, Woolworths' aim to replace all imported fresh garlic with Australian-grown, is a great achievement and a real credit to our Fresh team who have worked very closely with growers over many years. Of course we are always looking for innovative ideas in order to offer something new and exciting to customers.

7. What will it take from both the Vegetable Industry and Woolworths to position vegetables at the front of fresh horticulture produce in Woolworths stores?

All our product categories are of equally high priority. Obviously certain products have greater volume sales and as such, we need to carry more stock and to make it easy for customers to find them. The skill (and challenge) of retailing is to try to balance the choice, availability, stock levels and shelf space to meet the needs of customers each and every day. ■



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Australian vegetables claim centre plate



Youna Angevin-Castro reports from the official launch of the 'Vegetables Claim Centre Plate' campaign held at the Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne last month.

Last month, the Australian vegetable industry issued a public challenge the meat industry – move over, because Australian vegetables are claiming centre plate. This is the central theme of a major promotional campaign, driven by AUSVEG, to raise the profile of the industry, and encourage Australians to eat more vegetables.

"Today, we are claiming the rightful place of vegetables as the centre piece of every balanced meal," said AUSVEG Chairman, Michael Badcock at the official campaign launch, held at Melbourne's Queen Victoria Market on 9 February.

"With an increasing number of overweight and obese Australians across all age groups, it has never been more critical that vegetables take centre plate in our diet.

"The Australian vegetable industry produces just about every vegetable imaginable. The flavoursome and nutritional value of vegetables mean that lamb and other meats need to move over."

The campaign was officially launched by The Hon Peter McGauran MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, who was joined by celebrity chef Georgina Damm of catering company Damm Fine Foods in the preparation of a fast, healthy and tasty vegetable meal.

During the event, Minister McGauran emphasised the importance of the industry to the Australian economy.

"The Australian vegetable industry is our fourth largest agricultural industry, with gross annual production worth \$2.2 billion.

"The Australian Government supports farmers across all sectors and welcomes the challenge laid down by AUSVEG to consumers to put vegetables at the forefront of their thinking when preparing meals," Minister McGauran said.

Minister McGauran emphasised the importance of the industry to the Australian economy.

"Last year's national health survey showed that the overwhelming majority of Australian adults still have a low intake of vegetables. This is despite the enormous health benefits to be gained from eating vegetables.

"To have vegetables claim the centre of the plate is what the industry needs to make consumers think differently about what we eat. To put vegetables at the centre of the plate is a huge goal, but [the industry] can be confident that backed by the skills of our growers and wholesalers, we have the quality, the range and the certainty of supply that will be needed to make this campaign a success."

Over the coming months, AUSVEG plans a series of events aimed at increasing the momentum of the campaign, including



major activities in conjunction with the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Sydney.

"In May, representatives from various segments of the industry will meet in Sydney at the Australian Vegetable Industry

Conference to discuss initiatives that will see the industry double its value and increase consumption of Australian grown vegetables," Michael said.

At the campaign launch, Michael Badcock also announced the involvement of Michael

Luscombe, CEO of Woolworths, as one of the key note speakers at the conference.

"Woolworths' agreement to speak at our conference is demonstration of their commitment to forging strong and mutually beneficial relations with Australian vegetable growers," Michael said. ■



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Australian Vegetable Industry Conference takes shape

Preparations are underway for the launch of the 2007 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Sydney.



With less than three months to go until the commencement of the 2007 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, things are starting to take shape. To be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour from 29 May to 1 June, this year's conference takes the theme 'Vegetables Claim Centre Plate' as its inspiration.

The conference program will feature an exciting array of speakers, including the major announcement of Woolworths CEO, Michael Luscombe, as the keynote speaker. A diverse program of research and development presentations is scheduled, featuring not only vegetable commodities, but also potato and onion streams, as well as a variety of panel sessions.

Once again, the conference will feature an industry trade exhibition, showcasing a range of products and services available to growers. The trade exhibition will open to the public at the Welcome Address on the first evening of the conference, and for the

duration of the conference delegates will have the unique opportunity to liaise with other growers, leading suppliers and farm and industry stakeholders.

Current trade exhibition participants include: Terranova Seeds, Dow Agrosociences Australia, Bayer CropScience, Vin Rowe Farm Machinery, Crop Care Australasia, Wyma Engineering, Dobmac Ag Machinery, Withcott Seedlings, AustSafe Super, National Harvest Labour Information Service, Organic Crop Protectants, Seminis, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Rijk Zwaan, Nufarm Australia Limited, NaanDan Australia, Agrichem, Chep Asia-Pacific, Measurement Engineering Australia, DAFF and FSANZ.

i For more information or to register for the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference visit www.vegieconf.com.au



Conference registration fees:

	Early Bird registration (until 13 April)	Standard registration (post-13 April)	On site registration (29 May-1 June)
Levy Payers*	\$270	\$320	\$370
Non-levy payers	\$370	\$420	\$470
Day registration	\$220	\$220	\$270

* Levy payers include Vegetable, Onion and Potato levies.



Vegetable Industry Awards finalists to be announced in April

Get ready, because the vegetable industry's 'Night of nights' is not far away!

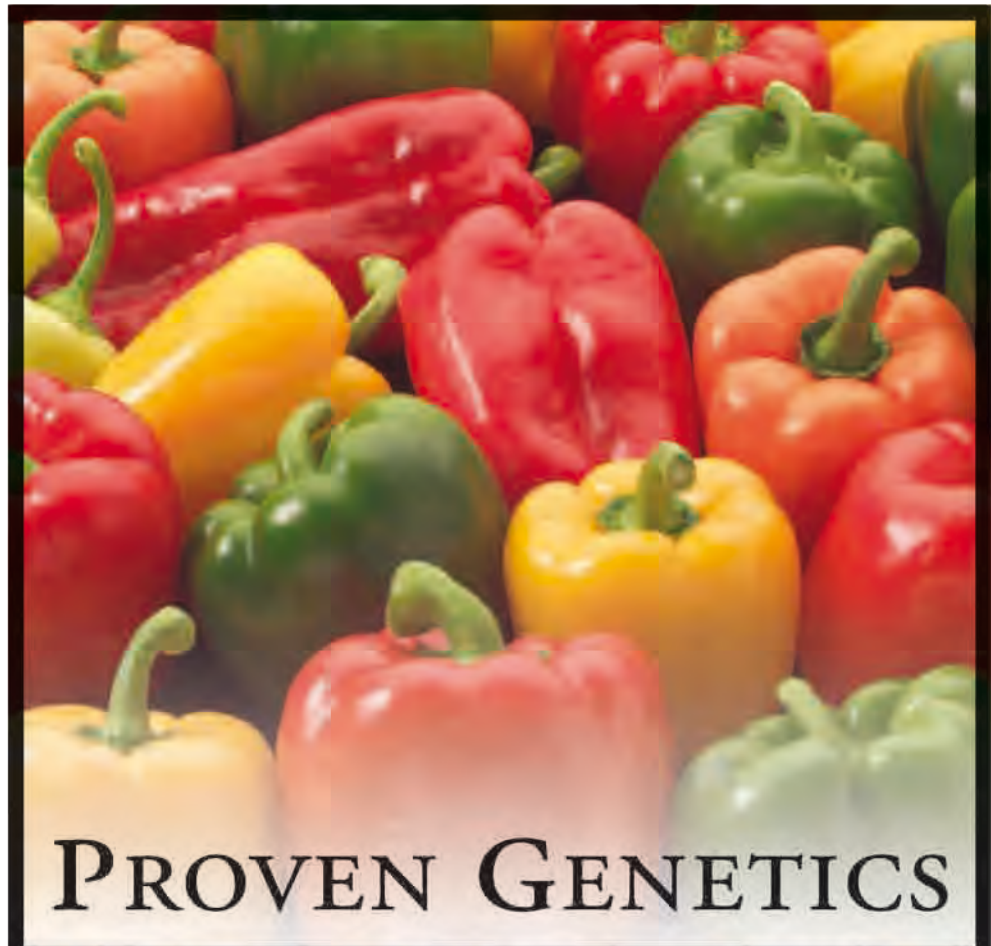
A professional industry recognises its best people and the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards are about raising our glasses to those who have raised the bar for excellence in the vegetable industry.

With the nominations in, the judging panels, comprising a past winner, an AUSVEG board member and a representative from the award sponsor, will be called to judge nominations based on the award criteria. Finalists will be announced in April for each award category, with interviews to be conducted during the next phase of the judging process.

The winners of the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards will be announced at a gala dinner, to be held on the last evening of the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference. Hosted at the appropriately named Dockside, featuring elevated views of Darling Harbour, five hundred guests are expected to attend. The Honourable Peter McGauran MP, Minister for Agriculture has also confirmed his attendance to help us recognise our industry's finest.

In keeping with the conference theme, Australian vegetables are guaranteed to 'claim the centre plate' on the night. The awards dinner will make a fitting end to what will no doubt be another great Australian Vegetable Industry Conference.

i For more information on the awards go to www.avia.com.au or call AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098.



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Foreign inspiration



More than ever, growers are looking to their overseas counterparts for ideas and inspiration, with many local growers making the journey to foreign destinations to examine growing and production processes. Bethany Hall speaks to John Said - a grower who likes to keep up with the very latest in developments and technology from around the world and has just returned from a trip to Europe where he focused on trends in packaging and distribution.

Based in Werribee, Victoria, John Said is the sales and operations manager for Fresh Select, a growing and shipping company. Fresh Select began operations 15 years ago, growing vegetables such as lettuce, cauliflower and broccoli, as well as providing a marketing and distribution service for growers.

"Their products were basically ready for dispatch for supermarket distribution from the field, with all barcode, inventory and quality assurance done in the field rather than taking the produce to a central packing location."

Late in 2006, John embarked on a tour of Europe with other industry members, interested in seeing how other parts of the world address issues that growers also face here in Australia. "I wanted to look at the whole process from seed to sale and the research and development that is part of that," he said. "I was also looking for new products and trends."

The group flew to Holland to investigate their glass house technology, and their lettuce and cauliflower production. "In terms of lettuce, the main difference between Europe and Australia is the packaging used and the size of the lettuce," John said. "They

also tend to have very seasonal products to keep the sweetness in the lettuce. They use different varieties at different times of the year to keep the flavour there."

John and the group also met with several major seed companies, eager for their perceptions of markets throughout the world and the differences between these and Australia. "They'll try certain varieties for certain countries of the world, including Australia," he said. "We'll give feedback about the direction our particular market is heading and what we need as growers. In terms of marketing and relationship building, in Australia we have a lot to learn from Europe in that respect. Forging a relationship with all stakeholders from the seed manufacturers right through to the supermarkets, helps the whole process and also helps us to better meet the needs of consumers."

The way of the future, according to John, lies in packaging the vegetables in a way that is beneficial to consumers, growers and retailers. Pre-packaging produce provides better shelf-life and hygiene as consumers aren't able to directly touch the product. Supermarkets also don't have to deal with consumers removing the outer leaves of the lettuce and the mess this can cause in the vegetable aisle. "Supermarkets can either take the lettuce out of the box and place it on the shelf, or bring the whole crate into the supermarket now that plastic returnable crates are being more widely used."

A walk through the vegetable section of any supermarket in the UK shows that the majority of their fresh products arrive in this pre-packaged manner – something Australians are beginning to see in supermarkets here too. As this trend continues to spread throughout Australian supermarkets, John said it was up to growers to keep up with the latest developments to stay relevant into the future. "I'll probably visit overseas markets every two years to keep up with global trends," he said. "Eventually who's to say that one of our supermarket chains won't be bought by a major international player with resources all over the world? In order for Australian producers to prevent an influx of imports from already established supply bases, we need to be right up there with global trends. The more we're resourced and the more information we have, the better equipped we will be to continue giving consumers what they want."

A case in point for John came towards the end of his trip on a farm just outside London in the UK. "Some of the operations we saw were absolutely mind-blowing, they have very intensive on-field production," John said. "Their products were basically ready for dispatch for supermarket distribution from the field, with all barcode, inventory and quality assurance done in the field rather than taking the produce to a central packing location." ■



Intellectual Property: A Guide for the Vegetable Industry

Kathryn Adams, Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Intellectual Property in Agriculture takes us through the tricky area of protecting intellectual property as a vegetable grower or breeder.

Intellectual property refers to a new product, process or thing resulting from inventive intellectual endeavour. *Intellectual property rights* are a monopoly right which protect certain kinds of creativity and innovation, allowing a person to exclude others from using or exploiting the creativity and innovation (for a limited time) and also to earn income from its use. Intellectual property rights are a type of property and can be bought or sold.

The intellectual property rights of most interest to the vegetable industry are:

- Plant breeders' rights (PBR)
- Trademarks
- Patents
- Copyright

All of these (except copyright) require a registration process. In addition, confidential information and trade secrets can be protected by common law, but there is no specific legislation for this.

For vegetable industries in Australia, Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) is the most common form of intellectual property of interest to

growers. Branding using trademarks, either on its own or with PBR protection, is also increasing. With biotechnology being used increasingly as a plant breeding tool, patents may also increase in importance.

Intellectual property refers to a new product, process or thing resulting from inventive intellectual endeavour

Importance of plant breeders' rights for vegetable growers

PBR was introduced in Australia in 1987 and it is increasingly common for horticulture varieties in Australia to be protected by it. There are 42 potato varieties protected by PBR and also varieties of other vegetables including field peas, lettuce, pumpkin, capsicum, chilli and onion.

It was introduced to help promote breeding of new varieties for Australian growers and also to give Australian growers access to varieties from other countries which have based their PBR scheme on the international

Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) convention. There are about 70 member countries and some breeders will not allow their varieties to be used in countries unless PBR protection is available.

Essentially PBR legislation gives the breeder of a new plant variety an exclusive right to grow, reproduce, condition, store, sell, import, and export the variety for 20 years (25 years for trees and vines). In return, the breeder is required to make reasonable quantities of the variety available at reasonable prices within two years.

For a plant variety to be protected by PBR it must be:

- New (not sold in Australia for more than 12 months, or overseas for more than six years for trees and vines and four years for all others)
- Distinct from all other known plant varieties
- Uniform
- Stable

When an application for PBR is made, the description and a photograph are published



in the Plant Varieties Journal. This provides third parties, whose commercial interests may be affected, an opportunity to raise objections within six months if they believe the application does not meet the criteria for protection.

Exceptions and limitations to protection

The PBR Act provides that the following uses of a protected variety do not infringe PBR:

- Private and non-commercial
- Experimental
- Plant breeding
- Reproducing (but not selling) farm saved propagating material, such as cuttings, tissue culture and seed.

Contracts

The framework provided by legislation gives the grantee an exclusive right to exploit the invention. The Act also gives the grantee the right to licence others to do those things, but it does not specify how this will happen or the conditions under which it can happen.

Therefore the grantee must set the conditions under which another person will be allowed to use the invention commercially. This is generally done through an agreement or contract. Traditionally these have concentrated on royalty payments, but in relation to PBR are now also including provisions about non-propagation, segregation, record keeping, entry onto premises, audits, destroying plant material if the contract is terminated and other general terms and conditions of use. If a person does not agree, they can either negotiate a change, or not use the variety.

Trademarks

A trademark can be a word, phrase, letter, number, sound, smell, shape, logo, picture, aspect of packaging or a combination of these. It is used to distinguish the goods and services of one trader from those of another.

Owners can apply to the Trade Marks Office at IP Australia to register their marks under the Trade Marks Act 1995. Protection lasts for ten years, and is renewable

indefinitely unless the owner has failed to use the mark in the preceding three years.

While a plant variety cannot include the name of a trademark, a variety can be marketed under, or in conjunction with, a trademark.

Certification trademarks can be obtained where certain quality standards or conditions of use have been met. In addition to IP Australia, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission must approve the application and the rules governing use, having particular regard to the parts of the Trade Practices Act 1974 dealing with anti-competitive conduct, unconscionable conduct and consumer protection. 



For more information: To find out more about applying for PBR, patents or trademarks, contact IP Australia on 1300 65 1010 or visit www.ipaustralia.gov.au/pbr



Photo reproduced courtesy of the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin.

Loving

Following his participation on an industry tour of the United States last October, winner of the 2005 Australian Rural Youth Young Farmer of the Year, Daryl Wilson, speaks to Jodie Powell.

Central Queensland grower Daryl Wilson is proud to call himself an Australian horticulturist. The third-generation fruit and vegetable grower won the 2005 Australian Rural Youth Young Farmer of the Year competition and has used the title to build on his already extensive industry knowledge and networks. He said to be named the top young farmer in Australia was no easy task, with judging across 30 practical and theory modules relating to major primary industries and business management. Daryl also received the 2005 Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) Young Leader Award for his achievements and involvement in the industry.

"Both of these awards have certainly provided plenty of opportunities which I've learnt from, as well as developing networks and contacts," Daryl said.

Last year he travelled to the United States as part of an industry trip for young growers.

He came away from the trip, which took in southern California and Arizona, sound in the knowledge that professional Australian growers are among the most progressive, sustainable and efficient in the world.

Daryl was shocked by the amount of water wasted in the areas he visited.

"The idea was to see, from paddock to plate, how their industry compared with what we do, and understand their strengths and weaknesses. The American vegetable industry is not subsidised, so to a degree we are on a fairly level playing field.

"While their size and scale is much bigger, with family farms ranging in size to 5000

acres, and corporate farms to 20,000 acres, we're well ahead with regard to how we use and value our land and water."

Daryl said one example was the size of American irrigation schemes – while the Ord River area in Western Australia covers about 30,000 acres, one scheme alone in California used up to 500,000 acres for cropping and flood irrigation.

He said growers and supermarkets generally shared expenses and then profits or losses equally, which created a shared risk in cropping and therefore more interest and support for growers by others in the supply chain.

"By our standards, it is surprising how little American growers pay for their water, and how abundant the resource is.

"They pay about \$20 a megalitre and they're entitled to up to six megalitres of water per acre per year – some of the growers here pay \$1500-\$2000 a megalitre.

"Because of our higher cost of water in Australia, we value it more."

However, Daryl said America was streets ahead in terms of marketing and the scale of their growing capability.

"The majority of crops are grown for forward contracts. Before commencing the season, (growers) have negotiated contracts up to 12 months in advance with their wholesalers or supermarkets."

He said growers and supermarkets generally shared expenses and then profits or losses equally, which created a shared risk in cropping and therefore more interest and support for growers by others in the supply chain.

"It was certainly a fantastic learning experience to take part in the tour, and I recommend other young farmers apply for such opportunities when they become available."

Daryl's family pioneered their current property, at Nankin near Rockhampton in central Queensland, in 1991. They have turned 400 acres of virgin land into a thriving entity that grows and markets 35 different whole produce or value-added product lines. The lines are supplied throughout central Queensland to supermarkets, the food service and catering trade and at various farmers' markets in the region.

Where succession planning challenges many growers, the Wilson family used the move from near Gladstone to allow Daryl, 30, and his older brother, Allen, and sister-in-law Sandra the chance to spread their wings.

"When we sold (near Gladstone), our parents, Roy and Thelma, asked us what we wanted to do – my brothers and I wished to continue farming.

"We eventually selected this property, and, with our parents' assistance and guidance we gained the experience of developing the farm from scratch. They took a back seat, but offered us guiding hands.

the lucky country



an active role from a young age and we were trusted with responsibility. We have made mistakes along the way, but have learnt from each experience. This is making us better farmers as life goes on.

"Our parents told us many years ago that whether it's a local field day or an industry function, if you can go to it and bring one thing home with you that will benefit the business then it's been worthwhile."

Daryl's role focuses mainly on managing the farm's hydroponic systems and Quality Assurance programs.


"With an ongoing six-year drought and its severe water shortages, we have had to adapt, for it is our desire to stay farming. With the average age of farmers around 55, I believe there is a huge potential for younger farmers now and into the future in our industry.

"We've always had

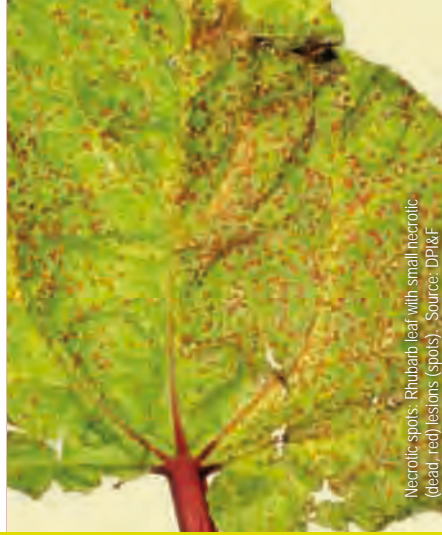
"I, like others, could have gone for big money in the local mining sector, but I enjoy the challenges and rewards of farming.

"At considerable expense to maintain viability, as a family we decided to change our farming practices from intensive soil cropping to a water efficient hydroponic system and an on-farm value-adding sector to remain sustainable because of limited irrigation water.

"The current drought is so widespread and Australian farmers are among the most innovative and forward-thinking in the world.

"As farmers, whether you're young or old...you have got to be able to adapt and change." 

Variety of isometric (spherical) virus particles partially purified from rhubarb. Source: DPI&F.



Necrotic spots: Rhubarb leaf with small necrotic (dead, red) lesions (spots). Source: DPI&F.



New disease cuts rhubarb

A newly discovered viral disease has the potential to halt the rhubarb industry in eastern Australia. Research has begun, but scientists are challenged by new virus species. By Angela Brennan

Until about five years ago, rhubarb in Australia was a small but steady industry, valued around \$7million per annum. Summer production centred on the cooler southern states, but in winter the Australian market relied on the substantial harvest of south-east Queensland, north-eastern New South Wales and southern Western Australia.

For the past three to five years, growers have lost up to half their season's yield due to a new disease that threatens to overwhelm the industry in eastern Australia. Since January 2006 researchers have been working against time to discover the cause of rhubarb decline disease that is causing some growers to consider halting production as rhubarb farming becomes unviable in their districts.

"The extent of the infection is still not known," said John Thomas, principal plant virologist with Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F). John is heading a research team to identify the causal viruses of the disease, and to develop long-term management strategies for growers in the industry. "If this disease is left unchecked, rhubarb farming may become unviable in some districts – a situation some growers are already facing," he said.

"We are only just beginning to get results, but it seems to be widespread in the eastern states," said John. "Fortunately none of the identified viruses have been detected in rhubarb samples from Western Australia, despite the presence of occasional plants with virus-like symptoms."

Symptoms include severe yield decline, leaf mosaic and necrosis (plant cell death). Most common early infection symptoms of rhubarb decline disease include small chlorotic (yellow) and necrotic lesions on the leaf blades. Infected plants with these symptoms gradually become yellowed and severely stunted and cease producing marketable stalks, the only edible part of the rhubarb plant.

"If this disease is left unchecked, rhubarb farming may become unviable in some districts."

Research is focused on developing detection tests for the viruses causing the disease and to determine the extent and means of transmission in Australian crops. So far most of the research has been centred on the Tamborine district of Queensland.

Essential to maintaining a viable rhubarb industry is the production of disease-free planting material, but at present this is not available. "This is a major drawback," John said. "Previously we had no means to rapidly multiply healthy plants and no indexing tests for the viruses," he said.

Procedures for producing virus-free rhubarb through tissue culture are being investigated and researchers hope that increased knowledge of the virus epidemiology and availability of virus-free planting material could help control the disease.

Overseas research has shown that virus elimination is possible through tissue culture, and preliminary experiments have shown that rhubarb can be established in tissue culture in Australia. If tissue culture proves successful, a national rhubarb growers group would administer the clean planting material scheme. The group is being formed as part of the long-term management plan, and aims to give equitable representation to growers in all states and availability of services and research outcomes to all growers.

A lack of knowledge remains the biggest hurdle for researchers regarding rhubarb viruses in Australia. "This is the first time research into rhubarb viruses has been undertaken in Australia," John said. "We are starting from scratch. Even though they've done research in Europe and US, and recorded several viruses there, only one of them (the potyvirus *Turnip mosaic virus*, *TuMV*) matches viruses found in Australian samples."

Australian research has revealed a number of viruses in diseased plants. These include *Cucumber mosaic virus* (CMV) and, in NSW only, TuMV. Research has also revealed other unidentified isometric viruses and widespread representation of a previously unknown closterovirus, similar to *Citrus tristeza virus* and *Beet yellows virus*.

"We need to identify, separate and characterise the previously unknown viruses," said Kathy Parmenter, a QDPI&F research scientist, "because viruses such as CMV




Healthy and diseased: Unsymptomatic rhubarb plant (left) and diseased plant (right). Source: DPI&F.

by half


and TuMV do not, by themselves, cause rhubarb decline disease. This raises the possibility that virus mixtures are responsible for particular symptoms."

"We also need to identify the insect vectors and alternative host plants," she said. "The incidence of these viruses in crops outside the Tamborine district is unknown, but due to the use of vegetative planting material, it is likely that they will be widespread."

Queensland growers are reporting increased prevalence of symptoms and estimate a 50 per cent reduction in the 2006 crop. Winter production is usually around 840 tonnes per season, and without a solution to the current crisis, the impact on yields, and livelihoods, could be devastating. 

The bottom line:

- Rhubarb decline disease has been found to affect rhubarb crops, particularly in the eastern states. Crop reductions of up to 50 per cent have been experienced by some growers.
- Research is currently seeking to identify the viruses which cause the disease.
- If growers observe suspicious symptoms in their crop they should contact researchers John Thomas (John.Thomas@dpi.qld.gov.au, 07 3896 9371) or Kathy Parmenter (Kathleen.Parmenter@dpi.qld.gov.au, 07 3896 9374).

 For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
Project number: VG05053
Keywords: rhubarb, virus

New rhubarb disease does not match global virus research

European scientists have recorded several viruses affecting rhubarb but prior to studies undertaken by the Queensland's DPI&F into *rhubarb decline disease* no such research has been conducted in Australia. Of the most commonly found European species, only *Turnip mosaic virus* (TuMV) has been detected in Australian rhubarb, and only in NSW.

Other viruses have been found in eastern Australian rhubarb affected by rhubarb decline disease. These include *Cucumber mosaic virus* (CMV), a previously unidentified closterovirus (long bending rod-shaped plant virus transmitted by either aphids, whiteflies or mealybugs), a possible cryptovirus (seed-transmitted plant virus with no known natural vectors) and other isometric (or "spherical-shaped") viruses. There are many different spherical viruses, but with differing transmission vectors. Until we have more information other than observing the particles it is not possible to predict the transmission vectors. Characterisation of these other viruses is critical in identifying the causal factor(s) of *rhubarb decline disease*.

Source: DPI&F.





Further research required for parsnip canker

Parsnip canker may be a growing problem, but Emma Reeves discovers new research by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries that aims to identify its cause and to help stop the rot.



Source: DPI Victoria

Dr Liz Minchinton, plant pathologist, and Des Auer, project scientist, are currently in the second year of a scoping study to determine the extent and cause of a disease affecting parsnip crops - parsnip canker.

Parsnip canker causes a black-brown blemish on the crown of the parsnip and can ruin up to 100 per cent of crop yields. "As soon as it has a blemish the parsnip becomes unmarketable," said Liz. "The canker affects anyone

who grows parsnips and all growers complain about it ... in some cases the canker ruins 80 per cent of the crop which makes the remainder uneconomic to harvest."

The first phase of the project aims to determine the extent of the canker through regular surveys of parsnip crops in Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania. The second phase of the project is to identify the principal cause of the disease. The identification process involves isolating fungi samples collected from infected crops, and re-infecting healthy parsnip roots in the laboratory.


Preliminary research indicates that the fungus *Itersonilia* causes the canker. However, the research findings also associate *Pythium*, *Phytophthora*, *Rhizoctonia* and *Verticillium* fungi with the disease.

"Once we find out what causes the canker, we can start to target management practices on how to treat it," said Liz. "At four to seven months, parsnips take a relatively long time to mature so it is not economic for growers to just spray fungicide for seven months," she said.

The disease has been known in Australia for the past 40 years and appears to be sporadic. Growers who plant crops within days of each other can experience one healthy and one diseased crop. The initial infection period appears to be within the first month of planting. "Growers can look at their field and within four to eight weeks know if their crop will be OK," said Des.

Parsnip canker has not substantially affected grower Darren Schreurs' crops.

However he has been happy to allow the researchers to sample his crops in order to put "something back into the industry... and so there can be a better understanding of what causes the disease." In particular he is interested in the contributing factors to the disease such as weather conditions, the time of year, soil quality and which parsnip varieties are more susceptible.

The study shows that the disease appears to be more prevalent in autumn and winter and to favour damp conditions. Spring crops, which are harvested in winter, appear to be particularly vulnerable to the canker. 

The bottom line

- Parsnip canker causes brown-black blemishes on the crown of the parsnip, rendering it unmarketable.
- The canker has been found to destroy up to 100 per cent of crop yields.
- Initial research indicates that various fungi are associated with the disease.
- The research team is keen to hear from any growers who are interested in participating in the study. Please contact: Dr Liz Minchinton, Plant Pathologist, Department of Primary Industries, Email: <liz.minchinton@dpi.vic.gov.au>, Phone: 03 9210 9224



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
Project number: VG05045
Keywords: parsnip, canker



A plant affected by snow pea Fusarium wilt. Source: DPI NSW.



Project tackles growing threat to snow peas

A collaborative project investigating Fusarium wilt of snow pea crops has discovered that the disease is a growing threat for Australian growers. By Graham Gosper.

Early findings from research aimed at combating Fusarium wilt in snow pea crops in Australia have revealed an increasing threat from the disease in the main eastern state growing areas.

Surveys found the disease in crops in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, and growers say outbreaks in many areas have become more severe in recent seasons.

“Unfortunately only two varieties of snow pea are suitable for production in Australia and both of these are susceptible to Fusarium wilt.”

The research project is a collaboration between the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI NSW), Sydney University, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney and Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F). The project was initiated in response to increasing grower concerns about the impact of the disease.

NSW DPI plant pathologist Andrew Watson, who is coordinating the project, said the threat from Fusarium wilt has expanded in line with the steady growth of the snow pea industry in recent years. “It is a persistent soil fungus which challenges health and yield and eventually causes the death of infected plants,” he said.

In Queensland, the state where the disease was first detected in Australia, the surveys found Fusarium wilt on farms around

Bundaberg and Gympie. In NSW, it was found in the Sydney Basin where most of that State’s snow peas are grown, and near Orange. Farms around Bairnsdale, Wy-Yung, Wairewa and Korumburra were found to be affected by the disease in Victoria.

Andrew said researchers at Sydney University and the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney have carried out a range of laboratory tests in recent months on the hundreds of soil and plant samples collected during the surveys. The tests, involving genetic diversity studies and DNA extraction, would enable the team to better target the fungus when control trials begin in the next phase of the project.


Andrew said the surveys also provided feedback from growers on techniques used to manage the disease. “The most effective method of controlling soil-borne diseases is to plant crop varieties which have some level of resistance to infection,” he said. “Unfortunately only two varieties of snow pea are suitable for production in Australia and both of these are susceptible to Fusarium wilt.”

Seed dressings, crop rotation and leaving infected land fallow for one to two years were among the most common management techniques used by the growers surveyed. Several growers said outbreaks were much more severe in dry times, reinforcing a need for fertiliser use and irrigation to help control the disease.

Andrew said the surveys also found a widespread belief among growers in some areas that the disease was seed-borne.

This view had been reinforced by accounts such as one from a Queensland grower who said wilt had devastated the first snow pea crop he planted in a block which had previously been cultivated with sugar cane for decades.

Andrew said all pea seed used in Australia is treated with fungicide and tests conducted in Queensland indicated the pathogen was not present in seed. However these tests would be repeated as part of the project to determine if the pathogen is in fact lying dormant in seed and infecting when the seed is planted.

Andrew said the next stage of the project will involve extensive field trials in the two affected states to determine the best control methods for the disease. The project is due for completion in late 2008. 

The bottom line:

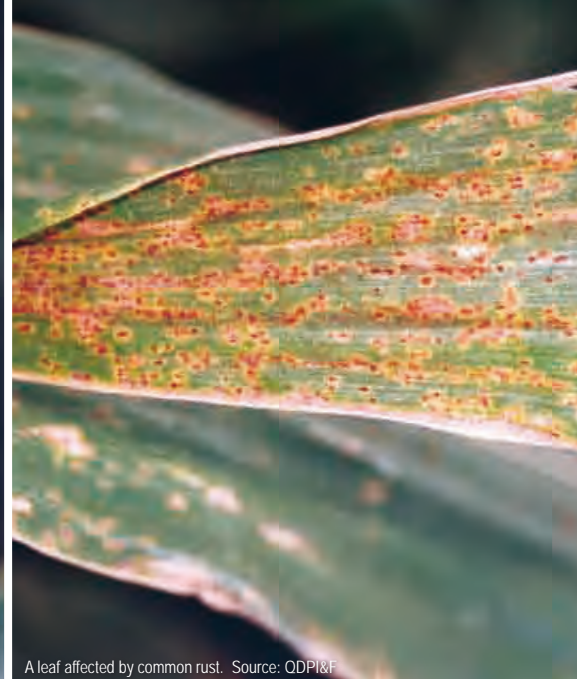
- Fusarium wilt is a soil fungus which affects the health and yield of snow pea plants.
- Surveys of snow pea growers in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have indicated that the disease is a growing threat.
- Current management strategies used by growers include seed dressings and crop rotation.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
Project number: VG05029
Keywords: Fusarium wilt, snow peas



Boil smut (late) on a sweet corn plant. Source: ODPI&F



A leaf affected by common rust. Source: ODPI&F

Sweet corn diseases 'well

A national survey sheds some light on how sweet corn diseases are affecting growers around the country. By Simon Adams.

A survey recently conducted nationwide has identified the most popular sweet corn varieties and confirmed sweet corn diseases are being well managed and contained by existing grower practices.

"The result was that the diseases did not appear to be a major problem for growers."

The research, conducted by the Departments of Primary Industries in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, undertook a survey of growers to identify the 4 different types of sweet corn grown in districts around the nation, to gain an accurate indication of disease containment methods and definitively catalogue the growth characteristics and requirements of different sweet corn districts.

"The team surveyed every production region in Australia, face-to-face with leading growers, to get an understanding of the

severity of diseases in the sweet corn industry," said project leader Peter Deuter of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland.

Among its other findings, the survey confirmed a strong perception within the industry that sweet corn growers were having a great deal of success managing crop diseases.

"The survey was conducted to highlight what the disease issues were, through all of the growing regions of Australia, and the result was that the diseases did not appear to be a major problem for growers," Peter said.

One of the participating growers, Rod Emerick, agreed the findings confirmed perceptions held regarding management of diseases, adding it was good to have some scientific research on insect pests.

Rod, whose crops were assessed as part of the study, grows sweet corn all year round in Gippsland, Victoria and Queensland's Lockyer Valley and the

Bowen/Burdekin area comprising mainly Goldensweet Improved and Sentinel varieties.

"There was some new information in there for us on various bits and pieces," he said.

"It's confirmed some gut feelings that have been floating around for a while and given us some more detailed information on insect patterns and crop characteristics," he said.

Although there was strong evidence that diseases were well contained, the research found that many growers had experienced a major crop infestation at some point in the last ten years, although most growers agreed they were able to manage the outbreaks.

Turicum leaf blight (northern leaf blight) and common rust were highlighted as the most frequently encountered diseases in sweet corn regions but Peter has indicated boil smut could become more of a problem.





Turcicum leaf blight has also been reported by growers. Source: ODPI&F

managed': survey

"In southeast Queensland, it's becoming an increasing problem, but only under moist conditions," he said.

"It could take out 10 to 20 per cent of a crop in a wet year, but it is not seen as important as a yield limiting disease. It is mainly a contamination problem in the packing shed.

"All you need is one or two cobs that are affected by boil smut and you'll contaminate your packing shed equipment, making it more difficult to go through the packing process.

"As all harvesting is done mechanically, there is less detection of the infection in the field, which means it then comes into the sheds and then works into the packing process," he said.

The survey found the most common control methods employed by growers were strategic application of fungicides and selective planting of disease-resistant varieties. The survey also highlighted that most growers are extremely vigilant in identifying diseases, scouting for disease and insects at the same time.

All growers were fully aware of the conditions under which turcicum leaf blight and common rust will normally occur, but due to the generally dry conditions, many were not finding it necessary to apply a fungicide.


The survey, in addition to identifying crop issues also provides a comprehensive list of sweet corn varieties currently being grown in Australia and confirmed Goldensweet Improved is the most commonly grown variety mainly due to its popularity in the consumer marketplace.

The Gladiator and Lancaster varieties also proved to be popular with growers, mainly due to their strong resistance to leaf blight and ability to be grown under cooler conditions.

Hybrix 5 is grown in southern Queensland during mid-summer when Johnson Grass Mosaic Virus (JGMV) disease is prevalent, as Hybrix 5 is a supersweet variety with JGMV resistance.

Around the country, when growing under humid conditions, growers generally select alternative varieties which have higher levels of turcicum leaf blight resistance.

Increasing usage is also being made of the Sentinel variety in the warm humid north Queensland area due to the variety's superior tolerance to leaf blight.

However, the survey noted where ideal conditions prevail, turcicum leaf blight will continue to require control through the strategic application of fungicides, particularly with varieties less adapted to tropical climates. 

The bottom line:

- A survey of sweet corn growers indicates that preferred crop varieties are Goldensweet Improved, Gladiator and Lancaster.
- Selections are based on consumer preference and disease resistance.
- Growers are found to be very vigilant when it comes to disease control.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
Project number: VG05035
Keywords: Sweet corn





Source: NETAFIM Multimedia Department

Getting water to where it is needed

With water becoming an increasingly scarce and valuable resource, what are the solutions for farming in our current arid conditions? Wasting thousands of litres of precious water is unsustainable, costly, and does little for the reputation of farmers in the community.

Roger Richardson and his son Kaine have been trialling tape irrigation, also known as trickle irrigation, with great success for the past five years on their potato crops in Newlyn, Victoria.

By running an irrigation tape along the top of the potato rows, just below the surface, the water spreads out and down to the root area. Roger said they had seen dramatic savings in both water and energy use since they changed over from spray gun irrigation. Fuel diesel and electricity savings of at least 50 per cent have been achieved and, importantly, their potato crop is improving in quality. And with the system being fully automated, the whole crop can irrigated at

the flick of a switch – cutting down the need to move pipes around in the middle of the night.

He said with tape irrigation there was little problem with evaporation as the tape was already below the surface and water continued down to the roots.

Fuel diesel/electricity savings of at least 50 per cent have been achieved and, importantly, their potato crop is improving in quality.

“Tape irrigation is the most effective way,” he said. “It has resulted in water savings of between 50 to 65 per cent compared to gun irrigation.

“You lose so much water through the wind and sun. With overhead irrigation you are going to lose 30 to 40 per cent in evaporation. With the tape irrigation we are putting the water right to the plant’s roots.”

The farm’s water saving equipment was supplied by Netafim, an Israeli company that formed on the principles of water sustainability and conservation. According to Netafim Australia’s marketing manager Shane Jones, there are a number of irrigating solutions to suit all types of horticulture and agriculture.

The Richardsons first started trialling tape irrigation when they were faced with a water shortage and possible cut in their production due to the drought in 2002. The Victorian government was offering an incentive program - Water For Growth – which dramatically reduced the cost of setting up.

Roger said the system required a very different approach to conventional irrigation methods as the operator cannot see the water going in. The tape is approximately 25 mm under the surface, making a soil moisture computer essential to the adequate running of the system.



Source: NETAFIM Multimedia Department

most

The crop is looking thirsty and the sun is beating down, so you head for the sprinklers. But the problem is that there is a strong northerly wind and as you turn the spray gun on all you can do is watch the water blown away in the wind. David Jarwood investigates alternatives for saving water.

He said that the tape gave them the ability to apply small amounts of water more frequently.

With the computer and associated weather station the Richardsons can tell exactly when the plants need more watering and estimate what moisture they will get from the weather.

"If thunderstorms are predicted for the afternoon, I can hold off on watering to see if they eventuate," he said. "And then once I turn on the taps, I can get around the whole crop in just 20 hours, whereas with gun irrigation it would take up to five days to do the whole crop."

Roger, who with Kaine has 40 acres under tape irrigation in Newlyn and 115 acres in Bridgewater, said crop quality had improved significantly and there had been increases in yield in the area of three ton per acre.


He said the savings in both water and energy had been offset to some extent by

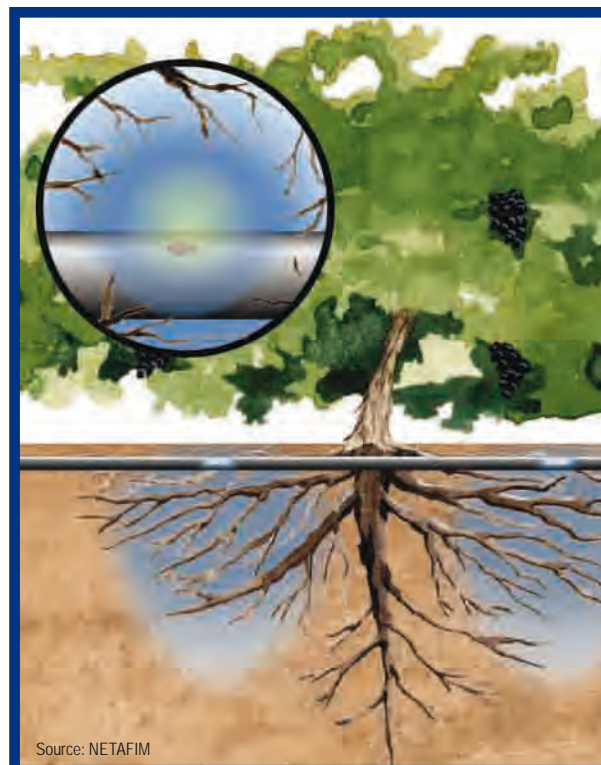
increased labour costs in setting up and dismantling the system. Through more trials they are hoping to further reduce these costs.

Roger said he could see benefits for a range of horticulture using the tape irrigation – especially in salty areas. He said irrigating would not have an impact on the water table due to no wastage of water or excess run-off, and with careful management and maintenance the irrigating tape could last up to five years. However, Roger is on the look out for a more durable product.

"We are still yet to find the perfect tape for irrigating," he said. "One that lasts 10-12 years would be more expensive, but would be worth the investment."

Roger Richardson said his family was still learning how to get the best out of the system and would continue to persevere.

"If the past few years are a sign of what climate change is bringing, then every drop will count," he said. 



Source: NETAFIM

Putting a lid on water losses from dams

Water losses from dams can be reduced by as much as 50 per cent, according to a company that has released a revolutionary anti-evaporation film.

The film, called Aquatain, is a liquid silicon, that forms a thin layer on the surface of water storages.

While no independent trials have been conducted, product trials conducted by the company show significant savings.

Glenn McDonald, a director of Ultimate Agri-Products — the company behind the new product, said a typical one-hectare dam in Victoria could lose as much as 13 million litres each year.

“Losses are even higher in the warmer areas,” he said.

Glenn said Aquatain formed a film “one molecule thick” which was unlikely to affect livestock and had no affect on aquatic life.

“It eventually breaks down to mineral silica, which is quite harmless,” he said.

It costs \$16 per litre and the recommended application rate for a one-hectare dam is an initial five to seven litres, plus a top up a one litre every fortnight.

The total cost over three summer months is roughly \$200.

Ultimate Agri-Products is a Melbourne company with 10 years experience supplying liquid fertilisers and soil conditioners, horticultural and agricultural producers.

Water saving tips

Use an irrigation system which minimises water loss and excessive water use.

- Consider pressurised systems that enable more efficient and accurate irrigation, instead of flood / furrow irrigation systems.
- Consider drip rather than sprinkler irrigation to minimise evaporation of water applied to the crop.
- The design and installation of irrigation systems is a specialised task. Professional advice could be required.

Develop a program to check, service and repair your irrigation system regularly.

- Ensure water is distributed evenly.
- Check for variation in flows and pressure.
- Check and repair cuts, blockages, leaks.
- Check that sprinklers, drippers, filters, and pumps are operating effectively.

Apply the correct amount of water, when the crop needs it, at the rate at which it can be absorbed by the soil

- Apply water uniformly.
- Apply water only so that it reaches the root zones of the crop.
- Avoid over watering which can result in:
 - poor crop quality
 - wasting of water and nutrients and other chemicals in runoff or seepage to groundwater
 - pollution of waterways and ground water from nutrients and other chemicals
 - rising of water tables which can increase soil salinity
 - increased costs.

Apply water only where it is needed

- Adjust irrigation systems so that they only apply water to the crop, not other areas.

Healthy soil for sustainable vegetable farms

ute guide

Soil guide delivered to growers

The Soil Interpretation Ute Guide, a pictorial reference guide to soil health, specifically compiled for vegetable growers, has been published recently. The portable handbook, aimed at helping vegetable growers across Australia to manage and monitor their soil in an effort to promote and restore soil health, is being sent to levy payers free of charge.

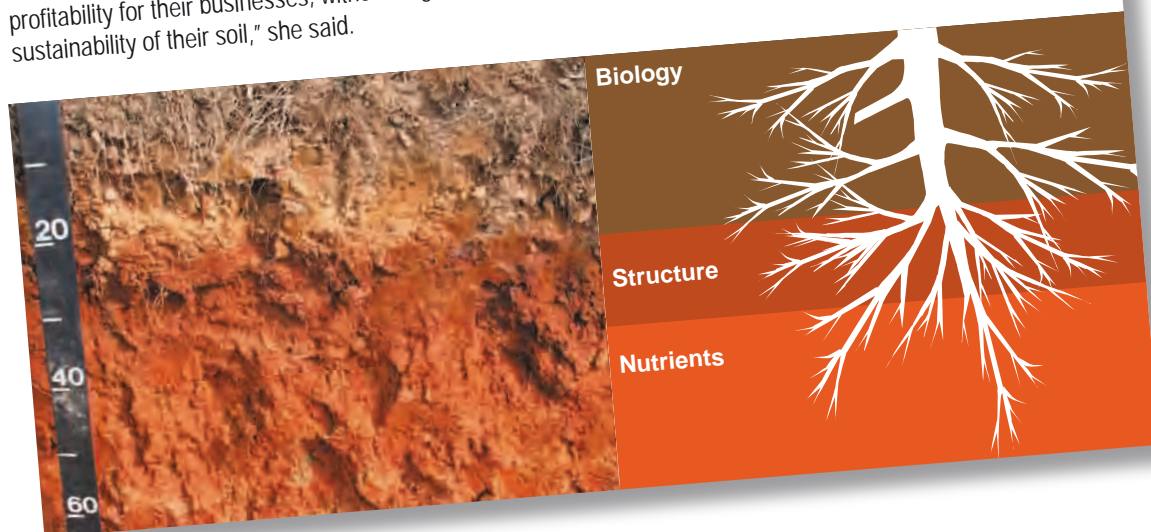
"The guide will assist vegetable growers to measure and record the health of their soil, and to put into place practices which will encourage the sustainability, productivity and profitability of their farms," AUSVEG's Environmental Manager Helena Whitman said.

"Historically, there has been little information of specific relevance for vegetable growers. Many growers have a general understanding of their soil, however they are always looking for ways to enhance production and profitability for their businesses, without degrading the sustainability of their soil," she said.

The guide, which is designed to be carried around in the car or tractor, covers the soil types in each vegetable growing region nationally, with pictorial references to assist growers to determine if there is a problem in their soil, and how to address the problem. The guide also provides information on interpreting data and soil readings so that growers can more easily understand and take the appropriate measures from soil test results.

The guide will soon be supported by a series of workshops to be held in each state across Australia. To register interest for the workshops, return the form included in your copy of the ute guide.

If you haven't received your copy of the Soil Interpretation Ute Guide, contact Helena Whitman, Environmental Manager on 0409 535 051 or helena.whitman@ausveg.com.au



Training survey of Victorian growers

Victorian growers are being asked to participate in a survey in an attempt to gauge the training needs of vegetable growers.

The short written survey, to be delivered by post, is asking growers to indicate their skill levels in a variety of areas. The information collected will be used to determine

the training needs of vegetable growers, and will culminate in the compilation of an online course database.

"Currently there is no comprehensive resource which allows vegetable growers to find training courses appropriate for their industry. By conducting this survey, we hope

to get an accurate snapshot of the training needs of growers, with the aim of developing a relevant and valuable database resource in the near future," AUSVEG's Environmental Manager Helena Whitman said.

All growers are encouraged to complete and return their surveys.



Feared parasite attacks carrots, broccoli and cabbage

Branched broomrape (*Orobancha ramosa*) has been found attached to carrots, cabbages and broccoli, indicating that the parasitic weed is a direct threat to Australia's vegetable industry.

Until now, branched broomrape has tended to be seen as a 'broadacre' problem. However, the pest had been found in the Murray Mallee, about 100 kilometres east of Adelaide, on the property one of the nation's largest potato producers as well as other irrigators who produce a variety of root vegetables.

According to Philip Warren, who heads a national initiative to eradicate branched broomrape, vegetable growers must be aware that there is no room for complacency.

"The discovery of broomrape attached to carrots, broccoli and cabbages shows clearly that this is a national problem of direct relevance to the vegetable industry and heightens the need for vegetable growers to be aware of and be on the look out for the pest parasite," Phillip said.

Horticulturists and dryland farmers are working to eradicate branched broomrape. This involves quarantine restrictions, which

limit movement of machinery, produce and stock, changes to farming systems to minimise the risk of the weed emerging, and increased management and weed control costs.

"The decision to eradicate the weed and impose the quarantine restrictions when the outbreak [of branched broomrape] was discovered more than a decade ago was prompted by a desire to protect access to export markets in countries that will not tolerate the risk of importing this feared parasite with Australian produce," Phillip said.

"The trade issue remains vitally important, but this proof that the Australian strain of branched broomrape will readily attack horticultural crops means the weed also poses a direct threat to Australia's vegetable industry."


"Overseas, growers faced with an infestation of branched broomrape have little option but to abandon infested

paddocks or change to crops that are not attacked by the parasite.

"Australia has decided to eradicate the weed by preventing its emergence until all the seed in the soil decays.

"This involves growing crops that do not host the pest – branched broomrape does not attack grasses so dryland farmers are growing increasing areas of cereals – and using herbicides that kill the parasite."

A branched broomrape plant is entirely dependent on its host so killing the host kills the parasite. Branched broomrape germinates and attaches to the roots of its host several weeks before it emerges, after which it sets several thousand minute seeds within three weeks.

Research undertaken as part of the Australian eradication initiative has shown that branched broomrape can be killed by some herbicides including glyphosate and several Group B chemicals. 

What to look for

The yellow-brown plant – it contains no chlorophyll so it is never green and relies entirely on its hosts for its nutrition - grows underground for several weeks before it emerges.

Once it appears above ground it quickly produces bell-shaped blue to mauve flowers

Branched broomrape (*Orobancha ramosa*), an annual plant that germinates only when suitable hosts are growing near it, is a parasite of broadleafed plants that attacks a wide range of crop plants and weeds.

and sets thousands of minute, dust-like seeds within a few days.

In irrigated environments, branched broomrape can emerge at almost any time of the year. In dryland paddocks in the Murray Mallee it usually emerges between September and early December, although

exceptional summer rains will produce an out of season generation.

An assessment of Australia's climatic and soil conditions indicates branched broomrape could establish and become a damaging pest as far north as Katherine in the Northern Territory, and Carnarvon in WA.

Delivering outcomes to growers

In terms of job satisfaction, few things please Alison Anderson more than seeing vegetables growers put research outcomes into practice on farms. That, she says, shows research dollars are being well spent, and the work she has been doing for more than six years is worthwhile.



Alison Anderson is the Vegetable Industry Development Officer (IDO) for NSW, one of six industry officers employed throughout Australia under a project to ensure vegetable grower levies are invested in R&D that meets the needs of the industry.

Alison's interest in R&D outcomes developed soon after she graduated from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture and completed a PhD in soil science in the early 1990s. She worked with agriculture-based companies in Central Western NSW early in her career, and soon became aware that, while large sums were being spent on agricultural research, outcome adoption rates by growers were often low. "R&D outcomes were often poorly communicated and I wanted to do something about the problem," she said.

Alison's appointment to the Vegetable IDO position in October 2000 provided the opportunity to do just that. A key objective of the IDO network is to help facilitate the timely and effective delivery of new technologies and practices to vegetable growers.


Alison is employed through the NSW Farmers' Association, one of the State grower organisations which support the IDO project. She is based at Sydney Markets. Although she works with growers throughout NSW, most of them have farms within the Sydney Basin. Her day-to-day work involves production and distribution of information through a variety of publications and helping growers to determine their state and national R&D priorities. She also organises, facilitates and assists with workshops, field days, conferences and other industry events that contribute to the effective transfer of R&D outcomes.

Alison says the fact that more than 80 per cent of vegetable growers in the Sydney Basin are LOTE (Language Other Than

English) growers provides one of her biggest challenges. "Most of our resources are in English, and I have only the one language," she said. "That's not a problem for the second and third generation growers, but it can be for more recent arrivals." On rare occasions Alison uses an interpreter to get a message across, though she says communication difficulties can usually be overcome in other ways. "Often it is simply a matter of trust," she said. "Some growers have an understandable distrust of authorities due to unfortunate experiences in other countries. They just need to know that we are there to help."

Alison says the other major challenge in her work involves the R&D priorities. "Not being able to include all the projects that the growers want is always difficult," she said.

Despite the challenges Alison says research outcomes today are better targeted to the needs of growers and more effectively delivered than they were a decade ago. She said that is due in part to greater competition for research funding and more awareness on the part of researchers of the need to deliver outcomes to those who can use them. "But the IDO network has also played a significant role and I'm sure it will continue to do so," she said.

Alison believes improved communication among the various vegetable industry groups is essential to its future development and prosperity. With that in mind she has been a prime mover in organising a dinner to bring NSW Horticultural Industry members together socially. The first was held in 2004 and a second in 2006. It was attended by more than 300 people. 

Economic Outlook

Factors determining the value of the Australian dollar

In the last edition, Ian James, AUSVEG economist explained the terminology used in foreign exchange markets. In this edition he outlines the key variables to watch that will frame the outlook for the Australian dollar.

Farm Survey

The Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group (AVIDG) is funding a Farm Survey of vegetable growers' financial performance. The survey will be conducted by the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics through face-to-face interviews in late March. This survey will bridge the gap between that conducted in late 2005 and hopefully the successful outcome of an AUSVEG application through HAL to continue these surveys for a further three years. This data information is critical to our industry and growers are being urged to fully support any approach to provide data.

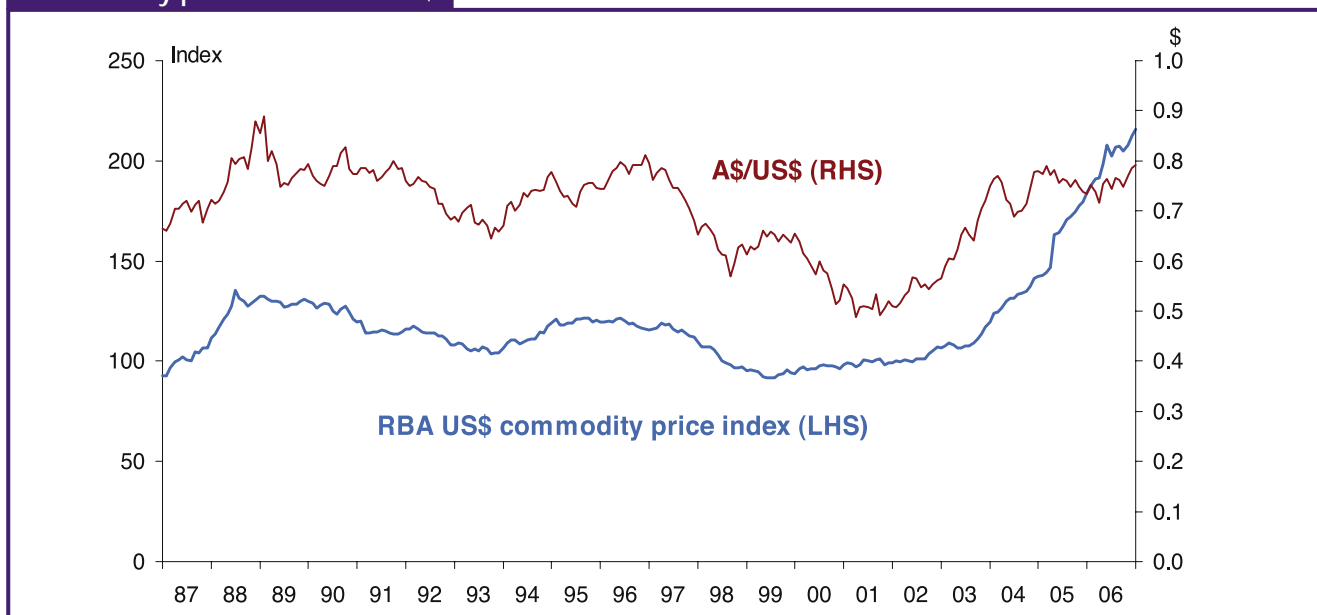
Dealing with foreign exchange

The Australian dollar (AUD) is one of the most widely traded in the world and as a consequence the level of volatility is high. Since the floating of the dollar in 1985 the yearly fluctuation in the value of the AUD, measured against the US dollar, has been in the order of 11 cents.

Achieving VegVision 2020 requires a long term strategic commitment to export rather than just the opportunistic dumping of surplus product on world markets. Growers should seek to minimise foreign exchange risk rather than attempting to enhance the profitability of export activity by speculative gains on foreign exchange transactions. Forecasting movements in the currency is fraught with danger, and if economists ever get it right it is usually by luck rather than science. Australian business is littered with the remnants of companies who took a strong position on currency movements.

While growers are best to avoid forecasting movements in the AUD, the currency must be watched and decisions made as to what range of exchange rate variability can be tolerated without destroying the profitability of the export activity. So what factors should growers look at to see in what direction the AUD is likely to head?

Commodity prices and the AUD\$



Source: Reserve Bank of Australia

Commodity prices

The AUD is sometimes referred to as a commodity currency i.e. its value moves in the same direction as world commodity prices. Hence, when commodity prices are strong, as at present, the AUD will also be strong and vice versa. While commodity prices are certainly an influence on the value of the AUD they are not the sole determining factor. The foreign exchange market has been caught out in the past in anticipating movements in the AUD based on commodity price movements. As the graph shows, there is some correlation between commodity prices and the AUD but it is not always evident.

Interest rates

Differentials in interest rates between countries can move capital funds from one country to another. Investors overseas will weigh up the interest differential against the exchange rate risk in deciding whether to invest locally as opposed to some foreign country. For example, many Japanese investors have invested in Australian securities and been willing to take on the possibility of adverse movements in the AUD/Yen exchange rate because of the large interest rate differential between Australian interest rates and, until recently, zero interest rates in Japan.

Economic Growth

Investors attempt to minimise risk. Assessments as to the health of the economy and the competency of economic management are important considerations. Despite running large current account deficits with the potential for depreciation of the AUD, foreign investors have warmed to the Australian story of a healthy economy, strong commodity developments and sound economic management, all of which have helped support the value of the AUD.

Movements in other currencies


A currency transaction is a two-sided coin. Developments in overseas countries can impact on the value of the AUD. Foreign exchange markets always have the \$US on a watching brief. A great deal of money is tied up in \$US denominated financial assets. The large trade surpluses that Asian nations have been generating have been reinvested back into United States government securities and other assets in the United States. This has helped to prop up the value of the \$US despite the United States running large trade deficits. However, any movement by Asian nations to bring some of the money back home could well trigger a run on the \$US. So, the AUD may strengthen against the \$US, because

of a strong sentiment shift in world financial markets against the \$US, which has little to do with Australian conditions.

Why is prominence given to the \$US?

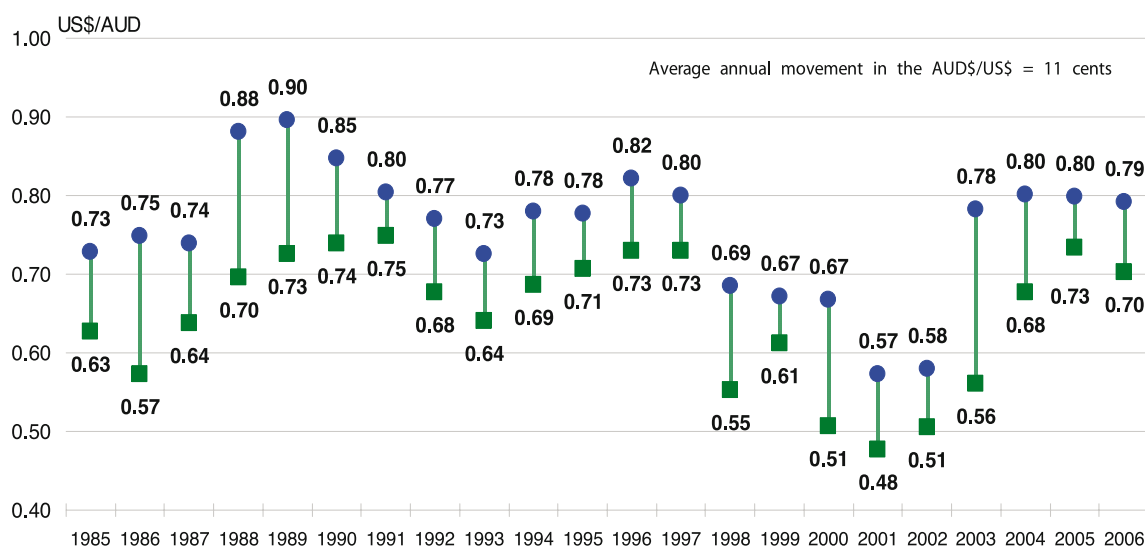
The Australian dollar (AUD) has a value set against any currency in the world. But in reality, prominence is usually given to the value of the AUD against the US dollar (\$US). Many contracts for our exports and imports are written in \$US rather than AUD and other currencies. As a result the relationship of the AUD to the \$US is much more important than the size of our trade with the US would suggest.

Prospects

The general consensus among economists is that the peak of the commodity price cycle has passed, the interest rate differential is likely to weaken and that the Australian economic growth story is not as strong going forward. All these factors have led most economists to forecast a fall in the value of the AUD. However, with the expected continuing growth of China and India, and some recovery in Europe underpinning demand for Australian resources, nobody is expecting a collapse. Don't say that I said so, but most economists are guessing that the AUD will end the year at somewhere between US73c and US78c. 

Australian dollar volatile

AUD\$ annual highs and lows



Source: Reserve Bank of Australia



AUSVEG Board Director Jeff McSpedden will chair the group.

Building a Strong National Organisation for the Vegetable Industry

Every agricultural industry needs a strong voice to represent farmers and growers in broader issues.

It is important that the vegetable industry is recognised as an important contributor to Australia in terms of economic profitability, domestic food supply, and rural society.

This makes sure that growers continue to be supported and appreciated by consumers, government and investors.

AUSVEG was formed in 1994, known then as the Australian Vegetable and Potato Grower's Federation. At this time, its role was to pursue issues of interest to vegetable growers and employed a part-time consultancy to carry out this task.

In 2004, the organisation recognised that there was a greater need for the vegetable industry to have a strong peak industry organisation to represent the views of growers and build capacity within the industry. At this point a full time CEO was appointed and the organisation incorporated.

Since incorporation there has been a rapid growth in the organisation to meet the demands of the industry as the crisis meeting, tractor rally and VegVison 2020 unfolded. The organisation now employs over 12 staff, and manages over 25 different national projects, manages the levy investment consultation process and actively lobbies government on issues such as Horticulture Code of Conduct, Security Sensitive Chemicals and Country of Origin Labelling.

Currently AUSVEG manages three discreet areas of operation on behalf of the vegetable industry. These are, the vegetable and potato R&D levy investment, national project service provision (such as communication activities) and lobbying activities.

The members of AUSVEG are the state vegetable growing associations, whose members are vegetable and potato growers. Due to AUSVEG's rapid growth, a review of the organisation's strategic direction and governance structure is being reviewed. To manage this process a taskforce has been set up. This taskforce will develop a working paper for distribution to all levy paying growers as part of a broader industry consultation.

The taskforce consists of all the Executive Officers from the state vegetable growing organisations, the AUSVEG CEO and Jeff McSpedden, an AUSVEG Board Director, to chair the group.

The first taskforce meeting was held on 30 January 2007 and a subsequent meeting held in late February to develop a working paper for broader consultation. ■

i For more information:
contact John Roach at
john.roach@ausveg.com.au



HAL launches new drought website

A new drought section has been established on the HAL website to meet industry demand for information sharing across horticulture.


The drought web page was established in direct response to a request from industry made during the drought session of the November 2006 HAL Industry Forum.

The drought session was designed to engage industry on a national scale and to discuss response options. Joint Horticulture Water Initiative Coordinator Dr Anne-Maree Boland outlined the current state of water across the nation and offered management strategies that growers could employ to help them through this most severe drought on record, and into the future.

Suggested management techniques included:

- Reduce evaporation from storages using shade cloth
- Prune to reduce size of canopy
- Use deficit irrigation strategies such as Regulated Deficit Irrigation (RDI)
- Bring forward tree replacement
- Use groundwater if available
- Undertake an assessment (budget) of how much water is needed over the season and ensure that there is enough water to irrigate during critical times – otherwise may need to purchase water
- Install new irrigation systems that can possibly use less water eg drip irrigation
- Use recycled water or other water supplies

Anne-Maree outlined some lessons from the drought, some of which may seem obvious, however, it was clear from recent discussions that these techniques had not always been employed.

- Identify and rank blocks based on their current or future production capacity (eg it is important to irrigate young blocks while old blocks near the end of production may be removed)
- Get good advice
- Develop a plan early
- Review the plan regularly
- Act decisively 



For more information: Visit www.horticulture.com.au/drought.

Industry welcomes Lucy Keatinge

The industry is pleased to welcome Lucy Keatinge, Industry Services Manager for the Vegetable portfolio at Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL). Lucy replaces Simon Drum, who recently left the position to pursue a consultancy career.

Lucy comes to horticulture after several years with the meat industry. Most recently employed by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), Lucy gained experience across a variety of areas, including MLA's R&D program in her role as Strategic Planning Business Coordinator.

Based in Sydney, Lucy will be the primary point of contact at HAL for all members of the vegetable industry. As the industry interface, Lucy hopes to maintain an open line of communication, with a view to tackling major issues affecting the industry in a united and cooperative fashion.

"The development of trust relationships is really important, as you can bring whatever issues you need to the table," she said.

Lucy's role at HAL will predominantly involve maintaining a positive relationship with major stakeholders within the vegetable industry. In particular, she will be involved in ensuring that, moving forward, R&D investments are aligned with the national strategic plan, VegVision 2020.

"The whole strategic plan is still relatively new, and that represents to me a significant change in the way proposals will be evaluated. The R&D program will need to be considered in light of VegVision.

"The industry IAC plays a major part in that. We have a lot of industry endorsement for projects, but it is critically important to ensure that the projects fit in with the strategic plan." 



"The development of trust relationships is really important, as you can bring whatever issues you need to the table."

Thank you and farewell...

The industry farewells Simon Drum after two years as Industry Services Manager with Horticulture Australia. Simon has taken up a consultancy role, and will continue to be involved in the vegetable industry into the future. The industry would like to thank Simon for his hard work and commitment over the last couple of years, and wish him the best of luck in his new career.



Drought assistance for “bigger” small businesses

The Government has extended Exceptional Circumstances (EC) drought assistance to farm-dependent businesses employing up to 100 staff.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said the decision widened the EC eligibility criteria from businesses employing up to 20 staff, to those with up to 100.

“The drought is taking a heavy toll on small businesses that are heavily reliant on farmers, such as agricultural machinery and equipment retailers,” Mr McGauran said.

“These businesses provide valuable jobs in towns across the country and are an important part of the rural economy, and this assistance will help many through these tough times.

“This additional drought assistance builds on the range of other measures the Government has introduced to help rural Australia through the worst drought on record, including extending EC to all farmers, irrespective of what they produce.

“We will continue to support our farmers and the businesses that rely on them throughout this drought.”

Minister McGauran said the new measures would extend interest rate subsidies and income support to agricultural businesses employing up to 100 staff that

derived at least 70 per cent of their income directly from farmers located in EC-declared areas.

The announcement builds on the Government's unprecedented response to this drought – a commitment of \$2.3 billion in assistance.

Farmers and small business operators are urged not to self-assess their eligibility for assistance or other payments and services, but to contact the National Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16 to check their eligibility. ■

Security sensitive ammonium nitrate fertilisers project

A new project funded through the National Vegetable Levy will look at the impact of Security Sensitive Ammonium Nitrate (SSAN) legislation on nitrogen fertiliser use by vegetable growers.

Researchers from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) will investigate the effects that the changes to the availability of ammonium nitrate fertilisers are having on growers. Of particular interest will be the effects on nitrogen management practices and economic returns. The researchers will also identify alternative products that can be used as replacements for SSAN fertilisers and how these alternatives can be integrated into nutrient management strategies.

An important part of the project is a national telephone survey of vegetable growers, which will be carried out in March/April 2007 by McGregor Tan Research company. Growers are encouraged to participate if contacted and are assured that all information they provide will be anonymous.

The information gathered from this survey will allow researchers to determine not only how growers are coping with the changes to

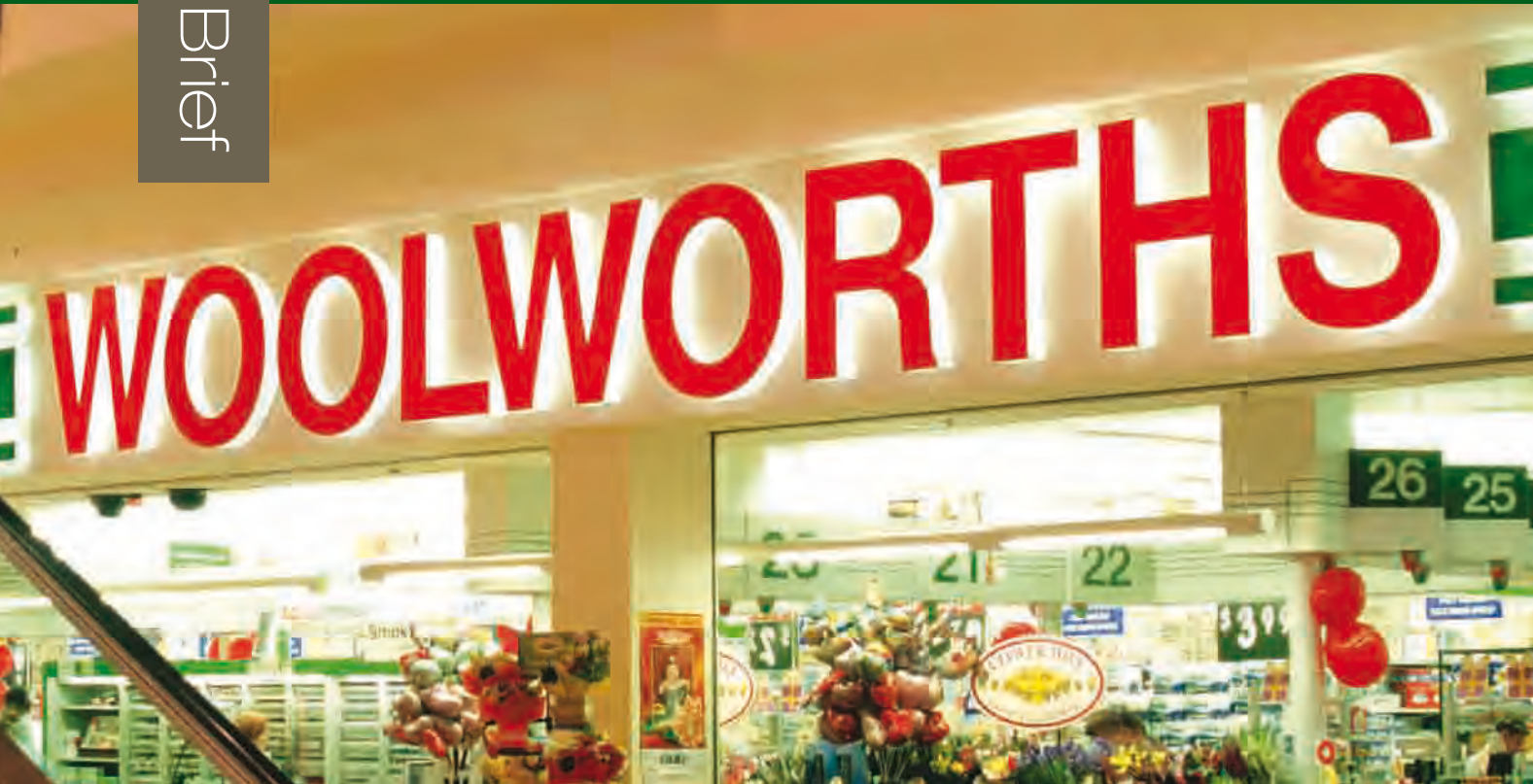
SSAN fertilisers but also what gaps exist in relation to alternative products. This will help target extension work and future research towards the needs of growers. The other main components of the project are a literature review and an economic analysis of alternative nitrogen fertiliser products.

The project findings will be communicated to vegetable growers via a series of fact sheets to be produced and distributed in the latter half of 2007, and growers and other industry participants will be kept informed of progress through articles in various industry magazines. The project, including a final report, should be complete by the end of 2007. ✓



To participate in the survey or for more information, please contact Kerry Porter on 08 8303 9575 or porter.kerry@saugov.sa.gov.au

\$4.7 million for Drought Relief Exceeds All Expectations



The Woolworths National Drought Action Day, held on January 23, received overwhelming support from Australian shoppers, with profits for the day totaling \$4,714,033. This amount far exceeded the expected total of \$3 million and clearly indicates that the issue has struck a chord with Australians everywhere.

All Woolworths and Safeway supermarkets around the country reported a significant increase in customers who were keen to make a contribution to farming families in need.

The money will be distributed by the Country Women's Association (CWA) with two thirds going directly to help families with household necessities such as utility bills, groceries and back to school expenses.

The remaining one third will be set aside for an initiative to support sustainable agriculture. Woolworths acknowledges that it is not an expert in this field so will be working closely with the CWA and the National Farmers' Federation to identify how best to direct this portion of the money.

The National President of the Country Women's Association, Lesley Young, was greatly inspired by the support of

the Australian people. "Australian people rally together in times of adversity and this amazing contribution is evidence that we can really pull together when we need to.

"We have seen the best of Australia and we have been reminded that there is a strong and enduring link between the country and the cities. All Australians are suffering this drought together," Lesley said.

"This initiative has raised the spirits of people in the country beyond belief. Across the country, we've had people contacting the CWA asking how they can help and how they can make a difference, not just for the Drought Action Day but also into the future," she said.

Woolworths CEO, Michael Luscombe, said that visitor numbers to Woolworths and Safeway supermarkets across Australia had exceeded his expectations.

"In the lead up to National Drought Action Day, we had a great response from community groups, sporting clubs and businesses wanting to promote the cause and help farming families. We would like to thank everyone who kindly offered their support.

"The farming community is such a vital part of our history, culture and our daily lives and we believe the day has made a small, but profound difference in raising awareness of the issues they are facing. I would like to underline Woolworths' absolute commitment to supporting rural communities and we look forward to building on this initiative over the coming months and years," Michael said. ■

i Application forms for assistance will be available from the CWA from February 1 2007. The CWA has also announced a national toll free telephone line 1800 237 876

Consumers want fresh produce

Knowing what consumers want from fresh food will help businesses market and manage their produce after harvest, according to NSW Department of Primary Industries postharvest researcher, Dr Jenny Ekman.

Jenny says consumers are looking for “quality, speed, safety and nutrition in fresh produce”.

“Sensory analysis – in which panels of consumers are asked to provide feedback to researchers on fresh food characteristics – is of growing importance to the postharvest industry.

“Understanding consumer perceptions is the key to marketing and the produce management practices required from farm-to-plate”, she said.

Jenny, from DPI’s Gosford postharvest research group, is Manager of the 2007 Australasian Postharvest Conference, which is being held in September this year on the NSW Central Coast.

This year’s conference will for the first time feature an industry day, which will focus on developments in sensory analysis as well as market access, innovative technologies, and linking research to results.

Expert researchers and industry leaders will provide an insight into their methods and results.

Jenny said sensory analysis is uncovering new information about consumer relationships with produce and is providing knowledge that will help industry develop their businesses.

She says keynote speakers at the conference “will present their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities provided in a rapidly changing global market.

“Businesses will be able to find out how research providers can support investment in systems of produce management and marketing which meet consumer needs.”

Jenny said industry would benefit from an improved understanding of the research sector and the expertise available for them to draw upon.


Conference participants will hear about new packaging, storage and transport technologies, as well as innovative approaches to marketing and ways to encourage industry to adopt new technologies.

“Research providers, meanwhile, will gain a better appreciation of the commercial drivers and challenges industries are facing and how their postharvest research can add value to businesses investing in new technologies.

“There is significant strategic value here for all participants”, Jenny said.

Case studies of innovative businesses that have captured the benefits of using new postharvest technologies will be examined.

The scientific program for the conference includes providing research results in the areas of functional foods, fresh cuts, modified atmospheres for storage, quarantine treatments, produce quality, molecular studies and preharvest effects on postharvest quality.

The conference theme is ‘Postharvest at Work’. It is to be held from 10-12 September at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Terrigal. 





Growing
the Business
of Farming

NSW
Farmers
ASSOCIATION

Grower support group says it's time for unity

Graham Gosper speaks to Luke Jewell, Senior Policy Analyst with the New South Wales Farmers' Association (NSWFA).

Luke Jewell believes vegetable growers sometimes overlook the many benefits and services the NSW Farmers' Association (NSWFA) provides for horticulture industries. Luke is the Senior Policy Analyst with the association, Australia's largest single grower support group offering member services and representing member interests. He is part of a team of analysts and government relations experts working to achieve outcomes that support horticultural and regional communities in NSW.

"Governments are not interested in dealing with a multitude of small grower groups and will often remain inactive on an issue if they perceive industry has no single credible policy position."

Luke lists the NSWFA's leading role in convincing the NSW Government to mandate a horticulture code of conduct among its most important achievements. "Our fight to save DPI research centres and success in gaining significant concessions for growers on pesticide record-keeping are among others which have helped the horticulture industry and vegetable growers," he said.

"The expertise offered within the association covers a broad range of services significant to horticulturalists including industrial relations, farm safety, chemical user training, and the association's core business of advocacy."

Luke said the progress towards the establishment of a code of conduct showed what can be achieved when individual groups are willing to put aside smaller agendas to work for the good of the industry as a whole.

"With a large percentage of LOTE (Language Other Than English) growers and a range of associations representing different nationalities, the vegetable industry in New South Wales is understandably fragmented," he said. "But at the same time the need for the industry to speak with one voice has never been greater."

"Increasing imports, competition for water in urban production areas, land-use conflict in peri-urban vegetable producing regions, and rising production costs are among issues where vegetable growers now need to present a united front."

Luke said the need for NSW to have a vegetable industry strategic plan to tie into the recently completed national plan (VegVision 2020) had also been identified. "This can only be developed on the basis of accurate statistics," he said.

"A ground truthing study is urgently needed to accurately verify production and demographic data so resources can be equitably allocated to all members of the vegetable industry from both levy-funded R&D and State and Federal government funding."

Luke said none of these gains could be achieved without a unified approach by the NSW industry.

"NSW Farmers' Association has already demonstrated that significant progress can be achieved when the industry speaks with one voice," he said.

"It is keen to continue its work with growers and organisations who appreciate the need for greater unity within the industry. Governments are not interested in dealing with a multitude of small grower groups and will often remain inactive on an issue if they perceive industry has no single credible policy position."



For further information on NSW Farmers' Association contact the Membership Services Centre for the cost of a local call on 1300 974 000 or visit www.nswfarmers.org.au

AUSVEG - CEO Message



I was asked this month by Victorian growers to seek clarity around the National Vegetable Levy. AUSVEG - the organisation, and the levy process started around the same time in the mid 1990s.

Ten years down the road and what do we have? AUSVEG undertaking a strategic, membership and constitutional reviews on one hand, and a review of the National Vegetable Levy consultation and investment process and Horticulture Australia's Industry Development program on the other. So the question begs – have we progressed?

The answer is a very emphatic - YES. So what are the indicators?

As an organisation, AUSVEG is indistinctly showing growing pains in that its actions have outstripped its original framework (constitution). It has grown in both size and capacity in a short space of time and developed its own 'being'. Management structure, Board strategy, financial management and corporate image have all changed substantially in a short space of time to better reflect that changing need.

As a peak body for managing the investment process for the National Vegetable Levy, it is appropriate that the methods and systems are reviewed, discussed and debated. This is happening in a number of areas at this time and it can be confronting to those who have either become comfortable with the systems or have some grievances either with that system or with individuals within those systems. These reviews should be happening every five years, not after ten years in this instance.

As an industry, we are on the threshold of renewing our engagement with consumers

in an attractive and meaningful way. This is the thrust of the "Vegetables Claim Centre Plate" campaign launched for us by Minister McGauran on February 9 and encompassing the Vegetable Industry Conference in May. For too long the vegetable industry has played second fiddle to other food industries with consumers. The groundswell of this movement is growing by the day as this industry starts to take ownership of its destiny.

When considering all of the above it is not surprising that AUSVEG as an organisation is changing from past practices to management and framework systems that are more appropriate with the aims and practices of tomorrow rather than those of past times. (No wonder time seems to be flying at the moment).

This month the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) deliberated over the National Vegetable Levy investment for the 2007/08 financial year. Areas of investment are based around the vegetable industry strategic plan- VegVision 2020, more detail will be made available shortly.

Please note that the structure for the Industry Advisory Committees has changed, and during April interviews will be conducted across Australia for growers to be part of these important decision making groups.

The industry is also searching for a range of technical experts to also be involved. AUSVEG in partnership with HAL is making sure that the investment is meeting the needs of growers through consultation and alignment to our strategic plan.

Late last month I met with Northern Territory Horticulture Association (NTHA). The Northern Territory vegetable industry is expanding rapidly and AUSVEG will continue to progress issues and make sure grower needs are represented in broader industry plans. Tracey Leo, NTHA Principal Officer was awarded the Rural Women's Award for the Northern Territory. Her project as part of her award is to investigate labour issues in the vegetable industry

In other news the Australian Consumer and Competition Council (ACCC) and Department of Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) held an Industry Forum for the Horticulture

Code of Conduct in Melbourne. Extensive debate centered on who is or isn't covered by the Code as well as 'keeping it simple' for industry. Further meetings are being arranged around Australia and this will follow shortly. The official start date of the code is May 14.

The Prime Minister and Cabinet's Security Sensitive Chemical consultation paper that was released in November closes March 1. Industry members of the working group for all industries involved are working to arrive at a one joint position. If we can achieve this outcome it will be a very powerful position for our industry in that all industries in Australia would be speaking together. This will then form the basis of our submission with our industry specific detail added. It has been fortunate that AUSVEG was appointed to this working group on an issue that has potentially large impacts for the industry if not handled sensibly.

The AUSVEG Annual General meeting was held on the 10 January 2007. AUSVEG Director elections were held and a number of our Board members changed. I would like to thank all past Board members for their considerable efforts over the last few years through an especially challenging period for our industry.

Welcome to new Board members, Dimitros (Jim) Trandos, John Brent, Paul Ziebarth, Steven Page and Luis Gazzola. Mike Badcock remains Chair of the organisation; Paul Ziebarth is the new Vice- Chairman and John Mundy our new Treasurer.

I would also like to welcome the new Industry Services Manager for HAL, Lucy Keatinge, who looks after the Vegetable, Potato and Onion Industries. Lucy must have left Meat and Livestock Australia just to stay in the "centre of the plate".



John Roach
Chief Executive Officer,
AUSVEG Ltd



New South Wales

Horticulture Code of Conduct

The ACCC is touring NSW and presenting an outline of the Horticulture Code of Conduct in the first two weeks of April. NSW Farmers Association is facilitating the meetings and encouraging growers to come along and take this opportunity to get some understanding on how the Code will impact the way they do business. The Code is set to be implemented from 14 May and there is to be no phase in period as this will have already occurred in the period between December and May. The take home message to growers and traders alike is get up to speed as soon as possible so business can be conducted smoothly and efficiently.

NSW State Election campaign

The Association has launched a campaign to inform voters and elicit positions from all parties and independents running in the NSW State Government election in March. A policy document titled "Protecting NSW Family Farms" has been produced in booklet form which outlines the key areas the Association believes need to be addressed by the incoming government. They are:

- Enhanced rural communities
- Reduction of red tape
- Secured future for farming
- Guaranteed water security
- Addressing climate change
- Continued sustainable farming
- Improved country roads and rail

Western Flower Thrips (WFT) on the rampage in Sydney

A group of approximately 35 growers and research, extension and industry representatives met in the Hawkesbury in February to discuss ways to address serious losses in crops due to WFT damage. A combination of ideal weather conditions for WFT and reduced options for control of the pest has meant growers are losing 50 per cent or more of their crops in the most important marketing window of the season.

Possible solutions put forward at the meeting included additional research work on chemical, biological, and cultural practices as well as additional data to acquire minor use permits for more chemical products. Growers at the meeting also resolved to form a grower group to address the specific concerns of their industry sector and to allow NSW DPI and other service providers a communications conduit into this group.

Luke Jewell
Senior Policy Analyst
NSW Farmers Association

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

Address: Level 10, Elizabeth St
Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: 02 8251 1885

Fax: 02 8251 1752

Contact: Luke Jewell



Victoria

The latest draft release for the Trade Practices (Horticultural Code of Conduct) Regulations 2006 has not answered the concerns of vegetable growers who conduct business direct with wholesalers who also sell their own produce and their neighbour's produce at the Melbourne Markets. It has again been questioned why all transactions should not be regulated at the first point of sale and not just to cover wholesale trading.

The unseasonable summer weather and lack of rain is putting a strain on the quality of vegetables. Any grower large or small experiencing loss of crops, financial hardship or stress from the current weather conditions can receive counselling and assistance by contacting the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Federal Government for more detailed information regarding drought assistance.

Water availability for vegetable growers in Victoria is the No 1 priority as growers make calculated decisions about future plantings and viability without water.

The Strategic Alliance Group formed by Melbourne Market User Groups have questioned both the Melbourne Market Authority and the State Government in relation to the continued pressure for a relocation of the market from Footscray Road. The Alliance Group has made numerous statements why market users are adamant in remaining at Footscray Road, yet the Victorian State Government is not prepared to listen and understand the reasons why market users do not see a business future in being relocated to a northern suburb.

The Melbourne Market is a central trading market for fresh produce and flowers and should remain centrally located in Melbourne for the benefit of all providers and retail buyers of fresh vegetables.

The VGA thank Victorian Vegetable Growers in their support of the Alliance.

The 2007 National Vegetable Expo will be held again at Werribee and the organising committee have allocated all the seed trial

plots to seed companies. The Expo Committee has received confirmation that a water allocation will ensure that all seed trials will be completed successfully. Exhibitors display sites are available for industry suppliers and registration brochures and can be obtained by contacting the VGA Office.

The Expo will be held Thursday 3 and Friday 4 May 2007 at the Gordon Institute of TAFE Production Horticultural Campus, Dairy Road off Sneydes Road Werribee.

Tony Imeson
Executive officer
VGA



Address: Mail Box 111,
Melbourne Markets 542 Footscray Rd,
West Melbourne VIC 3003

Tel: 03 9687 4707
Fax: 03 9687 4723
Contact: Tony Imeson

Tasmania



Address: Cnr Cimitiere & Charles Streets
Launceston TAS 7250

Tel: 03 6332 1800
Fax: 03 6331 4344
Contact: Denis Leonard

Queensland



Address: Floor 1, 385 St Pauls Terrace
Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006

Tel: 07 3620 3844
Fax: 07 3620 3880
Contact: Jan Davis

Western Australia



Address: Horticulture House
103 Outram St, West Perth WA 6005

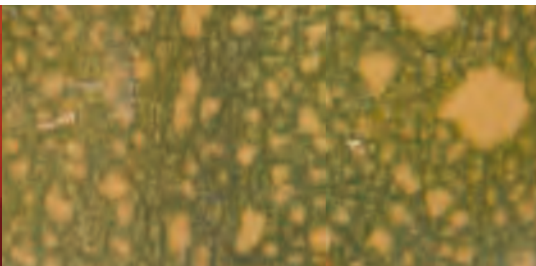
Tel: 08 9481 0834
Fax: 08 9481 0024
Contact: Jim Turley

South Australia



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

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



Calendar of events

MARCH 2007

6-7 March

Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) Outlook Conference

Hyatt Hotel, Canberra

For more information:

Contact Erica Bruen

Tel: 02 6272 2303

Email: ebruen@abare.gov.au

Website: www.abareconomics.com/outlook

13 - 15 March

SIFEL Fruit & Veg 2007

Paris, France

For more information:

Website: www.sifel.org/

MAY 2007

3-4 May

National Vegetable Expo Werribee

Werribee, Victoria

For more information:

Contact Claire Lupino

Tel: 03 9741 4508

Email: vegexpo@gordontafe.edu.au

3-5 May

Ag-fest

Launceston, Tasmania

Agfest is an event organised by the Rural Youth Organisation of Tasmania. Volunteers spend thousands of hours organising and working to ensure everyone enjoys the Agfest experience. 700 Exhibitors and 75,000 visitors.

For more information:

Tel: (03) 6331 6154

Fax: (03) 6334 0262

Email: admin@agfest.com.au

10 - 12 May

SIAL China 2007

Shanghai, China

For more information:

Website: www.sialchina.com

17-19 May

Murrumbidgee Farm Fair

Yanco/Leeton, NSW

The Murrumbidgee Farm Fair is held annually at the Yanco Agricultural Institute and is organised by WIN Television Griffith in association with radio station 2RG Griffith and NSW Department of Primary Industries.

29 May - 1 June

Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2007

Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour

The theme for the conference is 'Vegetables Claim Centre Plate', and is about promoting the vegetable industry as a serious agricultural contributor. A close look at consumers, their requirements and the motivations for purchasing fresh food will be a key focus of the conference.

For more information:

Tel: 039544 8098

Website: www.vegieconf.com.au

JUNE 2007

5 - 7 June, 2007

Elders FarmFest

Toowoomba, Queensland

Elders FarmFest is Queensland's premier primary industry field days. Showcasing over 2,000 products and attracting over 70,000 visitors. This is one of the fastest growing field days in Australia.

For more information:

Contact Rural Press Events

Tel: 02 67622399

Email: farmfest@ruralpress.com

AUGUST 2007

6 - 10 August 2007

Keep It Real

Options for integrating environmental stewardship and quality assurance for Australian agriculture

incorporating

5th EMS in Agriculture

5th National On Farm Food Safety and Quality Assurance conferences

Hobart, Tasmania

The name's changed, but if you've been before you know what to expect - a range of activities at the cutting edge of on farm environmental, food safety and quality assurance issues!

The conference and associated events will focus on the real issues, what really needs to be done and ways to do it.

We will once again have a range of workshops as well as the formal conference proceedings, tours and fantastic networking opportunities! A stimulating program is being developed by an industry based steering committee with representatives from wool, wine, dairy, horticulture, red meat and grains - guaranteeing there will be something for everyone!

For more information:

www.tqainc.com.au/conference

National Vegetable Expo (Werribee) 3-4 May 2007

The National Vegetable Expo continues a tradition of field days initiated by the Vegetable Growers Association (VGA) in 1963.

Held as a joint venture between the VGA and Gordon Institute of TAFE, the National Vegetable Expo attracts a range of trade providers and participants that provide specific services to the vegetable industry. It provides an important link between industry and those that service the industry with information, technology or services.

The National Vegetable Expo features spectacular displays of new vegetable varieties, as well as a range of exhibition stands featuring machinery, irrigation, packaging, computer software and much more.

Gordon Institute of TAFE Horticultural Centre Dairy Road, off 639 Sneydes Road Werribee, Victoria (Melways Ref: 206 D8)

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESS & FARMERS

Strong and prosperous rural communities are the backbone of our nation. To ensure our country remains in a strong financial position, improved support is being made available to agricultural dependent small businesses and more farmers to help them get through the prolonged drought.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

If you're a small business owner who receives 70 per cent of your income from farm business in Exceptional Circumstances (EC) declared areas and have up to 100 full-time employees you may now be eligible for income support and interest rate subsidies. This support is available to businesses inside and outside EC-declared areas.

INTEREST RATE SUBSIDY EXTENDED

Agricultural dependent small businesses and farmers are both eligible for the EC interest rate subsidy. The assistance cap has been extended over five years and increased to up to \$500,000. Apply through your state rural assistance authority. Visit www.daff.gov.au/droughtassist

DROUGHT FORCE

Drought Force helps drought affected farming properties with their workforce needs. People receiving income support who work 30 hours or more a week on a Drought Force activity do not have to look for work. Eligible Drought Force participants may receive an extra \$20.80 a fortnight and access up to \$1600 in training credits. Call 1800 004 226 or visit www.workplace.gov.au/droughtforce

MORE RURAL FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL COUNSELLING

There are now more Rural Financial Counsellors available in areas of greatest need. Call 1800 026 222 or visit www.rfcs.gov.au. There's also extra funding for the Family and Relationship Services Program for more face-to-face counselling. Call the Hotline on 13 23 16.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE BUSES

We're bringing assistance to your community with our Drought Assistance buses visiting rural Australia. Staff on board can help you apply for drought assistance on the spot.

CWA EMERGENCY AID FUND

Emergency grants are available to drought-affected families of small business operators, farmers and service providers to help meet immediate household costs. Community grants are also available. Contact your state CWA at www.cwaa.org.au

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND PLANNING GRANTS FOR FARMERS

Grants of up to \$5500 for professional advice and planning are available to farm businesses in areas that have been EC-declared for more than three years. The grants may be used to help you manage the impact of the drought on your business. Call the Hotline on 13 23 16, 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday.

Please don't self-assess. Call the Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16, 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday.

SUPPORTING DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES



GPY&R MFHS0078VA



Australian Government

CALL 13 23 16

And the winner is Nitrophoska® Blue Special



Nitrophoska®
Blue SPECIAL

Nutrient segregation is now a thing of the past with Nitrophoska® Blue Special.

Unlike blended products, every granule of Nitrophoska Blue Special delivers the same amount of nutrient to each individual plant, helping to maximise yields and returns.

Nitrophoska Blue Special contains a wide range of nutrients and is free from harsh chlorides making it ideal for use on vegetables, fruit trees and many other horticultural crops.

Try this blue ribbon fertiliser on your crop today.

For details from the fertiliser specialists, contact your local Incitec Pivot Agent or Dealer. Freecall 1800 333 197

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