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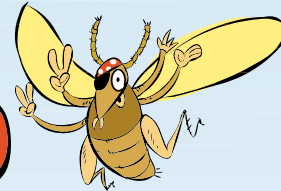
8 John Newman:
Speaking from experience

26 Vegetables successfully claim
centre plate at 2007 conference

32 2007 Vegetable Industry
Awards winners

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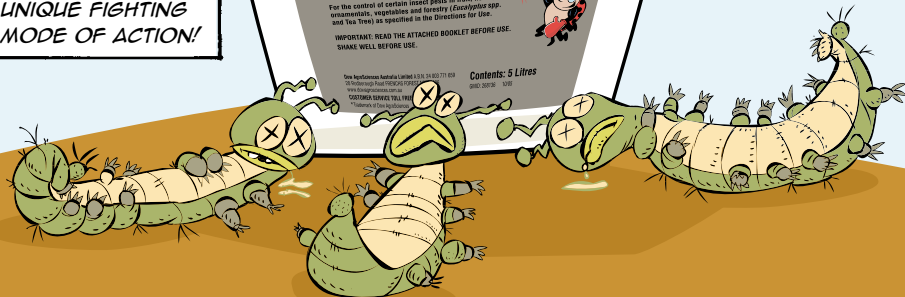
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John Newman: Speaking from experience



Best offence against pests is a good defence

8 53

Contents



- 6** Chairman's message—Michael Badcock
- 6** From the Editor
- 8** John Newman: Speaking from experience
- 12** News—Responsible budget is welcome news
- 13** News—Australian Grown campaign launched
- 14** News—New code to clarify agreements and reduce number of disputes
- 16** Michael Simonetta: Success stems from deliberate strategies
- 18** SAFF: A call to arms for SA growers

- 19** Roz MacAllan: Objectivity breeds results
- 20** Revised R&D structure off to a strong start
- 22** Website plugs marketing gap
- 24** Home-grown washer for water-wise growers
- 26** Consumer needs strike a chord
- 28** David Palmer: Meeting vegetables halfway
- 29** Professor Peter Cullen: Not a drop to waste
- 30** Successful gathering: Vegetable Industry Conference 2007





Consumer needs strike a chord

26



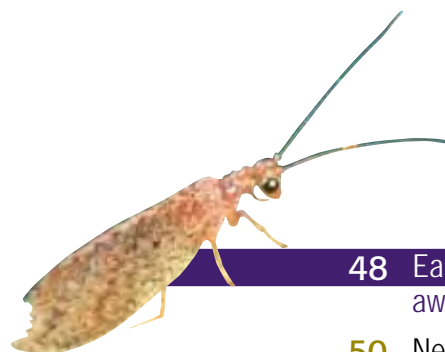
Vegetable Industry Awards Winners 2007

33



VEGETABLE INDUSTRY AWARDS 2007

- 32** Industry champions take centre stage
- 33** Vegetable Industry Awards Winners 2007
- 35** News—Levy payers to tour California
- 36** Functional foods provide competitive advantage to growers
- 39** Dianne Fullelove: A worthy investment
- 40** Take cover to restore the balance
- 42** Economic Outlook—Exports stabilise, imports remain a concern
- 46** IDO profile: Craig Feutrill



- 48** Easy solution strips away pests
- 50** New model spots the difference
- 52** News—Industry development program under review
- 53** News—Best offence against pests is a good defence
- 54** VHC: Championing local growers
- 55** AUSVEG report
- 56** Around the States
- 58** Calendar of Events





A word from the AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

Congratulations and an extended heartfelt thanks to all those who organised and sponsored the National Vegetable Industry Conference and Awards, especially the hard-working AUSVEG team. The conference ran flawlessly and has been commended to me Australia-wide. I am certain it put vegetables, rightly, at the ‘centre of the plate’.

It has been a busy couple of months. I have spent time with the Minister and Shadow Treasurer discussing issues such as water, managed investment schemes, food labeling, Chemicals of Security Concern, labour issues (both availability and skills related), biosecurity and minor use of chemicals.

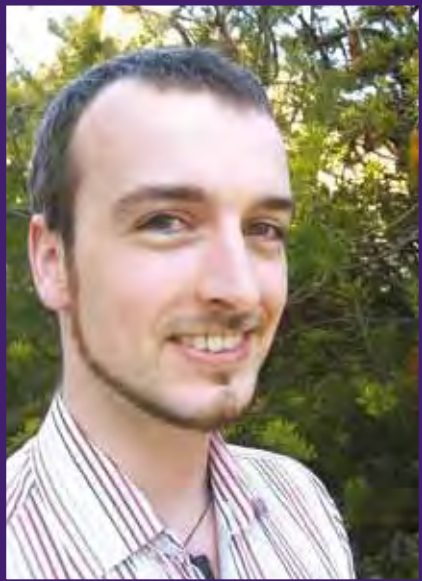
I would like to make special mention of the support the vegetable industry has received over the past few months from Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. He has attended

and presented at all our major functions and continues to listen to and act on our issues, even at very short notice. This is a great tribute to AUSVEG in successfully raising the profile of the vegetable industry and vegetable growers.

On this note, many thanks to the media for consistently reporting on our issues. Often it is easy to forget the important role the media plays in placing vegetables on their agenda, which helps put vegetables on the map.

A happy end to the financial year for all and thank goodness for the rain! Even if falls have been over zealous in parts, it is a welcome relief.

Michael Badcock
AUSVEG Ltd Chairman



As delegates discovered at the sensational Vegetable Industry Conference 2007 held in Sydney, success in agriculture means thinking beyond the farm gate, investing in R&D, and targeting consumer needs and desires to sell your produce.

It's an exciting time to be part of the Australian Vegetable Industry, there have been huge changes in recent years—radical water reform, free trade agreements, increased pressure from imports—and doubtless there will be more to come. The good news is that growers now operate in a global market. The world is literally your oyster.

More than any other period, the industry is at a crossroads. Leadership and innovation will be rewarded, as the winners of this year's Vegetable Industry Awards discov-

ered (page 32). A recap of the conference, trade show and keynote speakers can be found on page 26.

In this issue we also talk with grower Rick Butler, who designed his own soft-vegetable washing machine (page 24) and we meet Dianne Fullelove, AUSVEG's newly appointed People Development Manager (page 39). It's an important position, created as part of VegVision 2020 to help the industry meet future challenges by investing in its most important commodity—people.

Enjoy this issue of *Vegetables Australia*. It's my first as editor, and I'm keen to hear your thoughts and comments. It's your magazine and it will be growing with you.

Jim Thomson
Editor, *Vegetables Australia*

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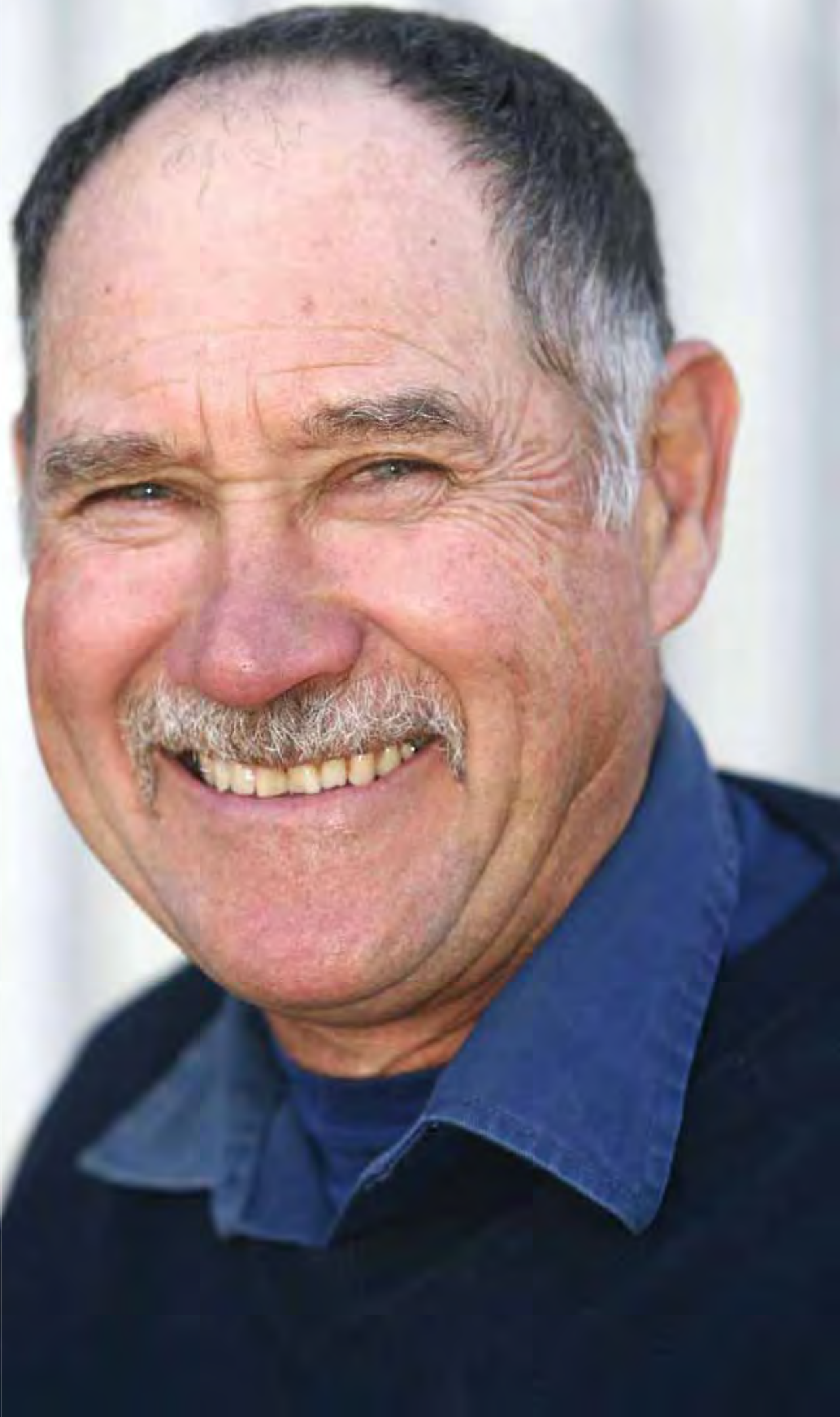
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Speaking from experience





Photography by Kelly Barnes

Representing the needs of grass-root growers is a priority for Vegetable Industry Production Advisory Group member John Newman, reports Graham Gosper.

South Australian vegetable grower John Newman is not one to waste words, but ask him what is needed to secure the future of Australia's vegetable industry and you'll get him talking.

John, 56, is a grower member of the restructured Vegetable Industry Advisory Groups. He was appointed earlier this year as part of changes to the National Vegetable Levy R&D process. The new structure comprises five expertise-based groups, which will make recommendations about annual investment priorities for the industry.

A staunch advocate for grower involvement in industry decision making, John says his family background helped develop his strong interest in the industry and its future. Together with two brothers he represents the fifth successive generation of Newmans to farm in the North Adelaide Hills.

"The family first came to the area in the early 1800s. Family members grew fruit and vegetables, which they sold on the banks of the River Torrens when the city of Adelaide was first settled," he said. Eventually their 20-hectare farm became known as a model nursery and it helped pioneer developments

such as wood-heated glass houses and irrigation farming.

Involved with vegetable growing since leaving school, John worked on the family farm before assuming managerial control in partnership with one of his brothers. About two years ago he branched out on his own to concentrate on the vegetable growing side of the business.

"No amount of strategic planning can succeed without input from grass-root growers. Growers are well placed to see when strategies are working and ... those at the top of the industry cannot afford to overlook their concerns."

Today he farms about 80 hectares with the help of his eldest son, Steven, near the township of Gumeracha. Their Hills Fresh operation is not far from where the Newmans first settled in the area. They supply cauliflowers and leeks to the Adelaide markets and they grow and bag lettuce for Swanport Harvest.

Valuing grower input

John has served on advisory groups for more than a decade and he plans to draw on that experience when he begins his role on the Production Advisory Group. His main aim is to ensure that growers continue to have a say on decisions affecting the future of the industry.

"No amount of strategic planning can succeed without input from grass-root growers," he said. "The value of grower input has been repeatedly demonstrated in recent years as the industry has responded to problems such as pest resistance and the spread of exotic diseases. Growers are well placed to see when strategies are working and when they are not, and those at the top of the industry cannot afford to overlook their concerns."

Ensuring the new committee structure benefits growers in all Australian states is important to John. "Growers are still concerned that the new system could lead to favoured treatment for some states and we will need to make sure that doesn't happen," he said.

Continues on next page



John expects his advisory group role will give him the opportunity to press for industry action on a range of issues affecting growers. He said that with competition from imported produce looming as a major threat to the viability of growers the industry needs to educate Australia consumers about the true value of quality fresh vegetables.


"Few Australian consumers have experienced prolonged shortages of vegetables because of our climate advantage. As a result they take fresh vegetables supplies for granted and aren't prepared to pay as much for them as they might for other food items," he said.

"The latest statistics show vegetable growers in Australia are getting older and that's an issue we all should be concerned about."

John believes consumers need to be made aware that the quality and freshness they have come to expect may quickly be lost if the viability of the growing industry is undermined by cheap imported produce. "They need to place greater value on the quality and freshness of produce grown locally."

Finding new ways to draw together Australia's industry and grower networks to provide more effective crop development and marketing is one issue John intends to raise with the advisory group. He also said there is a need to keep separate the agro-political and R&D arms of the industry.

Finally, he stresses that incentives are needed to attract more young growers to the industry.

"The latest statistics show vegetable growers in Australia are getting older and that's an issue we all should be concerned about." 



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Responsible budget is welcome news

This year's Federal Budget confirms that the government is listening to the concerns and needs of the Australian Vegetable Industry.

Prior to the release of the budget, AUSVEG compiled a wish-list. With a \$2.4 billion initiative for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio announced, many of these wish-list items have been wholly or partly met. However, increased support for research and development and an initiative targeting the role fresh vegetables can play in tackling the obesity epidemic were lacking.

"The big issue of water and climate change was not addressed in the budget but given the reserve of cash still available ... we can expect the announcement of some big initiatives later in the year."

"The budget has delivered on some of our wish-list with increased funding for road and rail, the farm business management program and re-establishment grants for farmers who wish to exit the industry, subject to asset and income tests," said AUSVEG economist Ian James.

"The big issue of water and climate change was not addressed in the budget but given the reserve of cash still available to the government we can expect the announcement of some big initiatives later in the year with spending deferred beyond 2007."

Delivering on demand

AUSVEG compared its pre-budget position with this year's budget outcomes:

- ✓ Maintenance of a fiscally responsible budget that doesn't fuel inflation and add pressure to already strained resources.

- ✓ Spending initiatives undertaken should concentrate on relieving bottlenecks and focus on long-term infrastructure projects.
- ✗ Proceed with water initiatives to secure the long-term viability of vegetable production.
- ✓ Increased funding to improve dilapidated road and rail networks.
- ✓ Increased funding for skills training for existing agricultural workers.
- ✗ Policies to tackle the labour shortage in rural areas.
- ✗ Increased scholarships and subsidies for rural students to encourage more young people to work in agriculture.
- ✗ Further support for research and development and measures to retain and provide a long-term career structure for researchers in the industry.
- ✗ Significant funding from the health budget directed towards everyday healthy-food intake (such as vegetables) to support initiatives in tackling Australia's obesity crisis.
- ✓ National FarmBis.
- ✓ Further enhancement of the AAA funding initiative.
- ✓ Responsible tax cuts.

AUSVEG would also like to see more resources for AQIS, which would translate into more rigorous testing on imported vegetables brought into Australia.

Similarly, while the inclusion of consultations with psychologists on the Medicare Benefits Schedule is a good start, further rural-health initiatives are needed to help combat depression and social isolation.

Federal budget 2007-08: an overview

- \$205.4 million over the next four years to continue the government's Agriculture—Advancing Australia (AAA) policy package.
- \$75.7 million over four years to build on the successes of the National Food Industry Strategy.
- \$112.1 million over three years to 2010-11 for landcare activities.
- \$50.0 million for a new environmental stewardship program (jointly delivered with the Department of the Environment and Water Resources).
- \$1.975 billion over five years for natural resource management (jointly delivered with the Department of the Environment and Water Resources).
- \$10.3 million to eradicate the Red Imported Fire Ant.
- \$12.7 million to strengthen Australia's quarantine risk assessments.
- New FarmBis is to be delivered nationally, ensuring Australian producers have equal and consistent access to training and education opportunities.
- FarmHelp support will be easier to access as previous recipients will have a second opportunity to obtain advice, training or a re-establishment grant, which has increased to \$75,000.

Minister Peter McGauran (second from left) on the pans at the launch of the Australian Grown logo with (left to right) Tobie Puttock, chef from Melbourne's restaurant 15, cook and television personality Maggie Beer and Ian Harrison, CEO of the Australian Made/Australian Grown campaign.



The criteria

For a product to carry the Australian Grown logo:

- Each significant ingredient has to be grown in Australia and
- All or virtually all of the processes involved in the good's production must occur in Australia.

If a product contains imported ingredients or components, a qualified claim is available. In this instance, a product descriptor must be included with the Australian Grown logo, such as "Australian Grown beans and corn". For these products to carry the Australian Grown logo:

- 50 per cent or more of the manufacturing and production costs of the good must occur in Australia
- 90 per cent or more of total ingoing weight of the good must consist of ingredients that have been grown or water harvested in Australia
- 50 per cent or more of total ingoing weight of the good must consist of ingredients or components specified as 'Australian Grown'
- 100 per cent of each ingredient specified as 'Australian Grown' must have been grown in Australia and
- The ingredients specified as 'Australian Grown' must not have been exported from Australia and re-imported.

Australian Grown campaign launched

New logo is good news for local growers

Australian Grown is a new labeling scheme for fresh and packaged goods. The Australian Grown campaign was launched at the Sydney Opera house on 1 June by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran.

AUSVEG, an Australian Grown campaign partner, worked with the Department for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Australian Made/Australian Grown Campaign Ltd to launch the campaign.

"The launch of the Australian Grown logo is a significant breakthrough following two years hard work by AUSVEG and the vegetable industry to highlight for consumers the importance of produce from Australian growers," said John Roach, CEO AUSVEG.

"AUSVEG will continue to play a leading role in ensuring Australian grown vegetables are accessible and clearly labeled for consumers' informed choice on supermarket shelves."

The centre piece for the scheme is the Australian Made/Australian Grown logo—the iconic green and gold kangaroo logo—the iconic green and gold kangaroo. Formerly called the Australian Made logo, it has been used in domestic and foreign markets for more than 20 years, on more than 10,000 products, and is recognised by 98 per cent of Australian. Its proliferation in the market ensures that consumers readily recognise the logo and attribute its Australian Made properties to locally-grown produce.

Roy Morgan Research conducted in November 2006 and February 2007 indicated that 67 per cent of Australians buy Australian products often or wherever possible. The logo is good news for Australian growers as it enables them to brand their products with the iconic symbol and leverage from its influential potential.

Foods eligible to display the logo include fresh, frozen and canned vegetables, fruit, dairy, meat, eggs, nuts, fish and other products grown in Australian soils and water. Processed foods may also contain the logo provided that they contain mostly Australian-grown ingredients, with a description of the Australian-grown ingredients.



The campaign will potentially benefit more than 60,000 food producers and help create and maintain Australian jobs.



For more information about the campaign, including guidelines and definitions, visit www.australiangrown.com.
Phone: 03 8662 5390
Fax: 03 8662 5398
Email: <ausmade@australianmade.com.au>



Mr Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry launched the Horticulture Code of Conduct at Parliament House

New code to clarify agreements and reduce number of disputes

Increased transparency in trade between horticulture growers and wholesalers is to be provided by the Horticulture Code of Conduct, launched on 10 May at Parliament House in Canberra by Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The code, which came into effect on 14 May, gives growers transparent terms of trade in their dealings with wholesalers at fresh fruit and vegetable markets.

"Under the code, wholesalers will be required to publish their terms of trade. The code will require the terms of trade to be made available to growers, and specifies 10 items of basic information that must be included in them," Peter said.

The code clarifies that a wholesaler is either a merchant, who buys a grower's produce for resale, or an agent, who sells produce on a grower's behalf for a commission or fee. Wholesalers must now declare whether they are operating as an agent or a merchant.

"This will avoid previous situations where growers did not know whether the wholesaler was buying their produce are acting as a go-between to a third party," Peter said.

Mediation matters

The code was introduced following concerns about the lack of clarity on many transactions. In some instances growers were advised of a price, which they disputed, after they'd lost ownership of the produce.

"There was no clear way to resolve disputes about price and quality. Litigation either for growers or wholesalers was rarely a viable option and business relationships were affected by a history of unresolved disputes," Peter said.

To combat this and in an effort to decrease litigious proceedings between growers and wholesalers, an assessor and mediation service has been introduced.

The Australian Government will subsidise the cost of mediation to ensure the service is available to all parties. Parties must pay their own expenses for attending the mediation sessions.

"Either party to a dispute can refer the matter to the Horticulture Mediation Advisor and ask that a mediator be appointed to resolve it. While a \$50 fee is paid on lodging such a request, the government will pay the mediator's fee," Peter said.

Horticulture Produce Assessors has been established to provide independent assessments on the quality and value of the produce.

"(This) will resolve many issues and concerns without the need for mediation or expensive legal action," Peter said.



Mediation is a four-step process.

1. One of the disputing parties is required to notify the other, in writing, that they are initiating a dispute under the code.
2. The parties must attempt to resolve the dispute themselves.
3. After three weeks, if the dispute has not been resolved, either party must refer the matter to the Horticulture Mediation Advisor.
4. The mediation advisor will work with both parties to help resolve a dispute and, if asked, appoint a mediator.



For more information: Visit www.daff.gov.au/hortcode or www.hortcode.com.au.

Key requirements of the code:

- Wholesalers publish their preferred 'terms of trade'
- Growers and wholesalers use written agreements
- Wholesalers are clearly identified as either agents or merchants
- Wholesalers provide written transaction information to growers
- Independent assessment is available on transactions, and
- Low-cost mediation is available if disputes arise.

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Michael Simonetta at one of the Perfection Fresh distribution centres

Success

Confident branding, an investment in intellectual property and a loyal supply chain are helping a Sydney-based company lead a vegetable revolution, writes Jodie Powell.

Perfection Fresh may not have been the first company to conceive the idea of vegetable branding but it is certainly spearheading a retail and wholesale trend.

Chief executive officer Michael Simonetta said Perfection Fresh had come a long way since its beginnings as a wholesaler at the Sydney markets.

“Once fruit and veggies are in your blood, it’s hard to get out of it—it might sound simplistic, but that’s the way it is.”

The company was started by his father, Tony, after the family sold its fruit and vegetable shop located at Moorebank, just outside Sydney’s Liverpool.

“My father was in retail, so we grew up working in a fruit shop. I worked there after school, on weekends and during school holidays, as many families did in those days to try and get ahead. Dad sold the store in the late ‘70s or early ‘80s and started in wholesale,” said Michael.

While Michael studied and worked in accounting after leaving school, he returned to the family industry in 1984.

“Once fruit and veggies are in your blood, it’s hard to get out of it—it might sound simplistic, but that’s the way it is.”

Middle brother Vince joined the business in 1983 and youngest brother John came on board in 1997, six years after Vince and Michael took over the company from Tony.

Back then, Perfection Fresh was a Sydney Markets-based commodity trader.

“We dealt predominantly in lines such as lettuce, cauliflower and broccoli, as well as mangoes and celery. Over a number of years we expanded the business to become more of a national marketer and distributor of a broader range of vegetables,” said Michael.

Perfection Fresh now operates from wholesale markets in Sydney and Melbourne and has plans to expand to another major city. The company has packaging and distribution centres in Bundaberg and Gatton, Queensland, and is about to build in Werribee, in Melbourne’s west. There is no sales floor in Perth but the company has a warehouse from which it distributes to supermarkets and independent retailers in Western Australia.

In conjunction with agribusiness investors, the company will open a glasshouse just outside Adelaide in October.

“We’re almost national and we’re looking at the possibility of going to New Zealand,” Michael said.

Marking its territory

To continue its success, Perfection Fresh has developed deliberate strategies, including pioneering the promotion of unusual vegetables such as fennel and artichokes.

The concept of value-adding was well received by growers, who saw the benefit in supplying vegetables for which a marketing strategy was in place.

Another strategy Perfection Fresh used was working with a core group of suppliers to establish niche vegetable lines by gaining access to the intellectual property of a range of varieties.

The first of these was broccolini—baby broccoli, which Michael came across while at a trade fair in America. Perfection Fresh brought the vegetable to Australia, accompanied by its trademark.

While it was not the first trademarked fruit or vegetable line on the market, it remains one of the most successful.

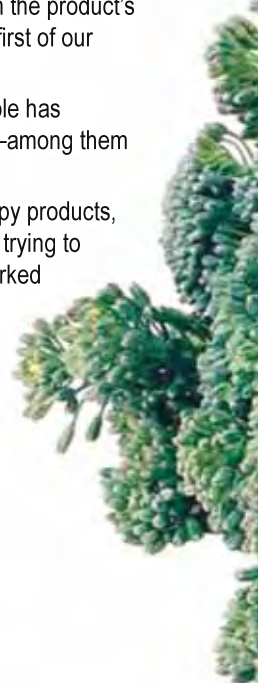
“Pink Lady apples originated before broccolini—baby broccoli, so we can’t take the kudos of being the first. I saw it in the USA at a trade show in the late ‘90s—it was only a concept product. I liked it and pursued its origins,” said Michael.

The company he approached was co-operative and directed him the product’s source, in Japan. “It was the first of our branded product range.”

The success of the vegetable has generated some drawbacks—among them copycat products.

“There are people doing copy products, like broccoli side-shoots, and trying to pass them off as the trademarked broccolini—baby broccoli,” said Michael.

Perfection Fresh has trademarked about a dozen vegetables and Michael said there were more to come.



stems from deliberate strategies

"We have other products in the development stage that hopefully will appear in the marketplace some day soon," he said.

Striking a chord with consumers

Perfection Fresh takes its brands seriously. The company commissioned a consumer

intelligence study a couple of years ago, partly funded by HAL.

"We learned what consumers are looking for, what they like and don't like," said Michael. Consumers are intelligent, savvy, and they know what they want from their vegetables.

The results of the study allowed the company to continue to grow the broccolini—baby broccoli brand, ensuring it was not simply a trendy, flash-in-the-pan product.

"It helped us understand more about the product. It is a new product and we were happy about how it had grown but we wanted to maintain that growth."

Also contributing to the success of Perfection Fresh is a concerted campaign to secure the company's supply lines.

"If you don't have a strong supply line, your business is not worth anything. By partnering with growers, either financially or through providing seeds,

The concept of value-adding was well received by growers, who saw the benefit in supplying vegetables for which a marketing strategy was in place.

we guarantee our supply. However, at no point do we want to be growers because it's not our area of expertise," said Michael.

"You don't achieve this sort of success without the support of a very good group of suppliers. We're proud to say that some of the growers we deal with today are the same people my dad dealt with.

"Just as important are the people we work with—the business is much bigger than my two brothers and me—and our loyal customers, as we would fail without their support."



broccolini—baby broccoli was the first Perfection Fresh trademarked product

A call to arms for SA growers

Today growers must compete in a global market. The South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) is working with them to keep pace with the changes. By Angela Brennan.



Agriculture and horticulture contribute more than \$5 billion annually to South Australia's gross state production and account for more than half of the state's export revenue. Forecasts indicate these industries have the potential to contribute a further \$1 billion to the state's economy over the next decade.

At a time when stagnant unit of production conflicts with increasing farm costs—especially for fuel, power and fertiliser—and the current shortages for casual labourers, the challenge is for SAFF to find innovative ways to service growers.

"This is a difficult period," said Wayne Cornish, president of SAFF. "Horticulture has become more global and our role is to help South Australian growers embrace change while maintaining sustainable businesses."

SAFF is the premier lobbying voice to government and funding bodies for farmers. "That remains our core business but these days we include training and education, R&D, extension, industrial relations, and access to information on a raft of other agricultural and horticultural issues," said Wayne.

Successful dealings

The federation has a remarkable list of successes. It worked closely with government to establish natural resource parameters, including water allocation plans for farmers and growers throughout the state. Additionally, it lobbied hard with other grower groups around Australia to achieve a Mandatory Code of Conduct for the horticulture sector despite strong opposition from some industry sectors.

SAFF is represented on consultative committees such as the Horticulture Plant Health Committee, which aims to protect

the South Australian industry against plant pests and diseases and ensure optimal outcomes for plant health. The vegetable industry is now working with Plant Health Australia to develop plans for responding to any adverse incursion.

SAFF was at the forefront of lobbying on the issue of security-sensitive fertilisers. While the industry was badly disadvantaged in the ammonium nitrate decision, current negotiations on a large number of chemicals should have a more favourable outcome. "This is an enormous issue and SAFF is lobbying hard to reduce compliance costs for growers," said Wayne.

For all its successes, SAFF is a surprisingly small organisation with fewer than 4,000 members. As the premier farming lobby group SAFF still has the capacity to win funding, however, as membership declines this task becomes more difficult.

"Our aim is to assist South Australian farmers and growers achieve sustainable profitability. That means we have to look outside the farm and broaden our views. We have to help growers tap the resources required to succeed. To do this we need to improve how we manage information and the range of services we provide, and increase our member base," said Wayne.

"The expectation is that SAFF will produce the goods but to exist we need the support of fully paid up members. We're still here, we can stay the course but not without a supportive membership."

i For further information or to become a member, please contact:
South Australia Farmers Federation
3rd floor, 122 Frome Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: 08 8232 5555
Fax: 08 8232 1311
Web: www.saff.com.au



As the premier farming lobby group SAFF still has the capacity to win funding, however, as membership declines this task becomes more difficult.





Objectivity breeds results

Roz MacAllan is a person who knows good food—a quality that will serve her well in her role as newly appointed chair of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). By Youna Angevin-Castro.

“My main role is to be an objective chair; not to have a vested interest in any of the projects presented. This will allow the IAC process to run efficiently and effectively.” said Roz.

Roz chaired her first IAC meeting in July, and has met briefly with a number of industry representatives. She is impressed by the quality of research projects presented to the IAC each year.

“I am impressed by the number of professionals involved in industry initiatives, and partnering arrangements that exist. A great deal can be achieved, as long as the committee representatives pay attention to what the industry is telling them.”

“I was overwhelmed by the amount of money—through the National Vegetable Levy and matched funding—and degree of expertise that industry has invested into research and development,” she said.

“I am also impressed by the number of professionals involved in industry initiatives, and partnering arrangements that exist.

I can see that a great deal can be achieved, as long as the committee representatives pay attention to what the industry is telling them.”

Over the years, Roz has served on many committees. She is the founder and past president of Slow Food Brisbane and is currently the national president of Women Chiefs of Enterprise International (Australia), an organisation concerned with the encouragement and development of professional women. To date, Roz’s experience in the largely male-dominated vegetable industry has been extremely positive. She said that, “everybody has treated me with the utmost respect and professionalism”. However, she is keen to encourage more women to become involved in industry initiatives.


“It is obvious that the vegetable industry is such a vital industry—so much can happen,” she said.

Consuming passion

“I have always had an interest in food. When I was much younger, I dreamed of running a restaurant, but at the time this was not a feasible career for a woman,” said Roz.

Instead, she concentrated on another love—the visual arts. Working in a variety of roles, both in Australia and overseas, this career path resulted in Roz opening a contemporary art gallery in 1987. However, she closed the gallery after four years, having decided to return to her first love.

“I opened a cooking school with a friend because it seemed like a fun thing to do. It went exceptionally well and exceeded all expectations. Before long, I was invited to become a food writer and things took off from there.”

With her husband involved in the wholesale fruit and vegetable industry, Roz was able to gain insight into the fresh food industry. This informed much of her work, and her desire to promote the seasonality of fresh produce plays an important role in her teachings and writings. She hopes that her diverse experience will help her to be an effective chair for the IAC. 



Revised R&D off to a strong

The new-look Vegetable IAC is up and running with greater representation for states—it brings the industry another step closer to achieving the goals outlined in VegVision 2020.

The first meetings of the new Vegetable Advisory Groups, which are based on the strategic investment pillars outlined in VegVision 2020, occurred in Sydney on 3 and 4 July.

The new advisory groups are consumers, market development, leadership and people development, information technology and dissemination, and production. These groups have replaced the six state-based product groups that, until March 2007, advised the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) about National Vegetable Levy Investment.

Members of the five advisory groups, including growers and specialists from private industry, education and R&D sectors, were inducted on the first day. A behaviour awareness session, held as part of the induction, gave all participants an appreciation of their working characteristics as well as those of their advisory group members. While sometimes confronting, this session was a great deal of fun, and it helped develop 'a sense of team' for participants.

Considerable time was spent developing priorities for the forthcoming 'annual call'. In June, through organisations and industry

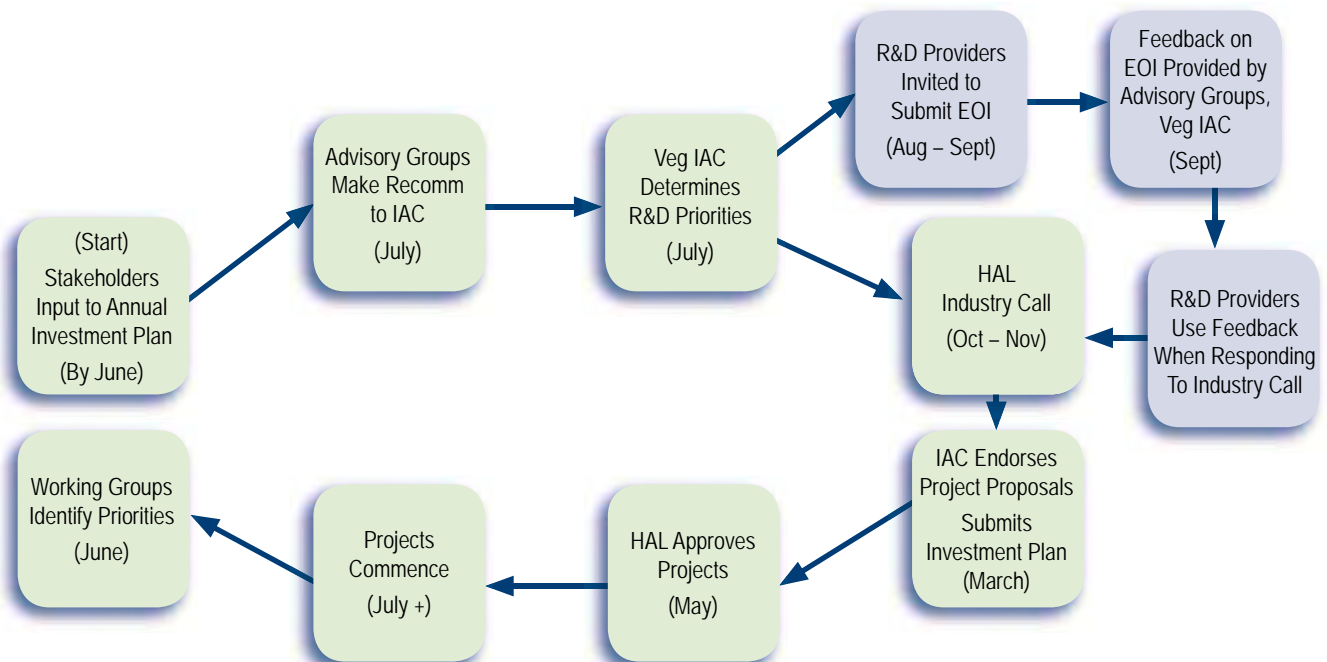
development officers (IDOs), all states were asked for input regarding the annual priorities. Some innovative programs were suggested and these will be advertised on the AUSVEG website prior to the official industry call.

New Vegetable IAC formed

Each advisory group then elected its grower representative to the Vegetable IAC (See table 1).

The Vegetable IAC comprises one levy-paying grower from each advisory

Cycle for development of Annual National Vegetable Levy R&D investment plan



structure start

Table 1. The Vegetable IAC comprises one levy-paying grower from each advisory group, one AUSVEG board member and an independent chair

Name	Role	State
Dene Lampard	Consumer Advisory Group	WA
David De Paoli	Market Development Advisory Group	QLD
Kim Vincent	Information Technology Development & Dissemination Advisory Group	NSW
Andrew Mathers	Leadership & People Development Advisory Group	SA
Kent West	Production Advisory Group	QLD
John Said	Victorian representative	Vic
Rob Henry	Tasmanian representative	Tas
Ian Young	AUSVEG board member	Tas
Roz MacAllen	Independent chair	

group, one AUSVEG board member and an independent chair. At all times the IAC is to include a vegetable levy payer from each of the six states.

The IAC is responsible for final recommendations to HAL regarding National Vegetable Levy Investment.


The key role of the IAC is to prepare an annual investment plan for submission to HAL, based on consultation with all industry stakeholders. This plan determines annual expenditure required to achieve outcomes detailed in the Strategic Investment Plan.

Two other key responsibilities are to:

- prepare a five-year Strategic Investment Plan for the vegetable industry and recommend investment projects to HAL for meeting the requirements of the strategic plan, and
- prepare an annual report for submission to industry and HAL that details outcomes achieved from expenditure outlined in the Annual Investment Plan.

HAL industry liaison manager Lucy Keatinge, AUSVEG CEO John Roach, AUSVEG IDM Ross Ord and AUSVEG

general manager Lisa Maguire join the IAC as required but do not have any voting rights.

The vegetable R&D levy allocation process runs on a 12-month cycle. Although certain activities may vary in their precise timing from one year to the next, the cycle includes several milestones that are fixed. This is because the vegetable levy R&D process needs to be compatible with equivalent R&D processes for other commodity groups managed by HAL. 

i For more information contact Ross Ord, industry development manager AUSVEG
Email: <ross.ord@ausveg.com.au>
Phone: 0412 430 728

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Website plugs marketing gap

Vegetable growers have an excellent opportunity to improve consumer demand for their produce, according to the architect of a consumer information website dedicated to promoting fruit and vegetables, writes Simon Adams.

The lack of easily accessed vegetable-related information for consumers is one shortcoming in a rapidly developing industry, says Mary Stewart, group manager business development for Melbourne Market Authority (MMA).

"One thing I discovered as I collated information for the MarketFresh website was that the vegetable industry doesn't have a lot of information readily available to distribute to the public," she said.

"This website is a prime opportunity to do just that, with much of the groundwork already done."

The website, www.marketfresh.com.au, is a one-stop resource for information about fruit and vegetables. It provides details about different products, including where they are grown, best storage and handling practices, popular varieties and methods for cooking them.

"Since we launched in November 2005, we've had 250,000 users and approximately 8.4 million hits—the number of times the page has been accessed," Mary said.

Re-educating consumers

"Research and anecdotal evidence revealed that the public had lost touch with the range of vegetables, how to use them and what they looked like. It is a problem we are trying to address—this website is part of an overall push to become more visible to consumers."

The site includes historical information, recipes, pictures and quirky facts, as well as interactive sections dedicated to educating children, an audience Mary is keen to target.

"We've been running a children's program covering about 35,000 children per year and the feedback we've received is that we need to encourage better education about fruit and vegetables," she said.

Children, particularly primary school students, are not the only targeted group. Much of the website's content is suitable for use at the tertiary and industry levels, including trainee chefs and nutritionists.

"The material is accessed by trainee chefs in all the major colleges. They use it on an ongoing basis," Mary said. Similarly, secondary school students use the website in hospitality and nutrition classes.

Much of the website content is sourced from industry experts and organisations, but initially Mary was heavily reliant on the fruit and vegetable manuals that were produced in the late 1990s.

"Although current at the time, a lot of the information had changed. The popular varieties included were out of date, and growing locales for some crops and suggested storage temperatures had changed," she said.

Supporting the industry

Although started by MMA, the website aims to establish a national focus, with discussions underway to develop links with central wholesale markets in other states. Brisbane Markets Ltd has recently joined.



The website also promotes retailers who source their produce from the markets.

"The key objective is to support the industry in selling more produce. Every greengrocer that remains in business can keep at least five smaller growers in business," she said.

Mary's research indicates that independent retailers, predominantly greengrocers, sell more produce than either of the major supermarket chains and she believes existing perceptions need to be changed.

"We need to start thinking of the independent operators as Australia's third major supermarket. That sector is very important to the markets and the future of the industry," she said.

The bottom line:

- Consumers appreciate easy access to information about vegetables.
- It is important to educate children about the benefits of eating fresh produce.
- Independent retailers collectively should be thought of as Australia's third major supermarket.

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The Australian Grown campaign is supported by financial assistance from the Australian Government.



Rick Butler's soft-vegetable washing machine recycles water to significantly reduce his business's water usage



Home-grown washer for

A \$32,000 grant from the Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund helped make one grower's dream a reality, reports Simon Adams.

A new soft-vegetable washing machine being trialled is likely to help growers reduce their water usage by thousands of litres each year, according to one of the project's architects, lettuce and Asian-greens grower, Rick Butler.

The project, funded through the Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund, involved designing and constructing a new machine that recycles the water used for washing vegetables.

Usage of biocides often requires water to be tested manually to ensure the dosages are acceptable. This is a task that Rick's new washing machine has eliminated.

Rick, who runs Butler Market Gardens with his parents Johanna and Peter, manages 80 hectares of farmland with a variety of crops including lettuce, Asian greens, parsley, onions, rhubarb, turnips and radishes.

"Last year, we decided we needed a better way to wash our Asian and soft vegetables as we were using a high volume of water," Rick said.

The washing machine, which is being trialled on Rick's property, captures and filters water so it is suitable for reuse, unlike many other washing systems that use water only once.

Granted an opportunity

While he had ideas for improving water usage in vegetable washing, Rick needed the jumpstart provided by the Smart Water Fund \$32,000 grant to develop the project.

"I came across the Victoria Government's Smart Water Fund and thought it might be an opportunity to capitalise on the offer. The project started once the government gave us the grant in December last year," he said.

The machine comprises a conveyor belt and storage tanks for about 2,000 litres of water, including a filtration system that 'cleans' the water for reuse.

"As the produce comes along the conveyor belt, water is sprayed over the vegetables and captured in a tank before entering a three-stage cycle," Rick said.

This three-stage cycle involves straining the grit and sand from the water into one tank, trapping organic matter from the water in a second tank and storing the water in a third tank before it is fed back through the machine to wash vegetables.

"Washing soft vegetables is not like washing carrots or potatoes where you have to remove a lot of sand and dirt from the produce. Asian greens or lettuce are actually very clean but they do need to be washed to meet quality assurance standards," said Rick.

In the second stage of filtering, a biocide additive is added to combat bacteria build up in the water. This is monitored by probes

in the water tanks that advise a computer of the water's bacteria levels and the required amount of biocide to remove and prevent further build up.

Usage of biocides, a standard practice when vegetable washing in the industry, often requires water to be tested manually to ensure the dosages are acceptable. This process needs to be conducted several times a day, a task that Rick's new washing machine has eliminated.

"We were trying to steer away from using chlorine as it required manual testing up to 10 times a day to monitor the dosages and ensure they were perfect. Using an automatic tester means you can walk away and know it's doing its job," he said.

Testing times

After being exhibited at the Australian Vegetable Expo in Werribee, the machine is being trialled and refined at Butler Market Gardens, where Rick and his team ensure the filtration systems work reliably and the correct biocide levels are maintained by the automated system.

Rick is hesitant to quantify the water savings his washing machine can achieve as it is still in the testing stage and water savings can vary depending on the size of the vegetable load being washed. However, using the example of a dipping tank for some of his crops, he believes that thousands of litres will be saved.

"For vegetables like continental parsley, parsley and rhubarb, you dip them in water



Rick Butler at his farm in Heatherton, Victoria.

water-wise growers

before you put them in a box. Straight away, we were able to replace our 6000-litre dipping tank with a 3000-litre tank," he said.

Rick is quick to clarify that his machine is not suitable for hard vegetable crops such as carrots, potatoes or onions, but he says the concept behind the machine can be adapted for other types of vegetables.

The bottom line:

- New soft-vegetable washing machine filters water in three-stage cycle so it is suitable for reuse.
- Automatic testing for bacteria levels in the water eliminates the need for manual checking.

- Concept for the washing machine could be adapted to suit other vegetables.

i The soft-vegetable washing machine will be available for purchase through Tripax Engineering in Bayswater, Vic. For more information: visit www.tripax.com.au.

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Matt O'Neill, nutritionist and director for SmartShape, was a hit with conference delegates, encouraging them to make vegetables fun for consumers

Consumer needs strike a chord

With 90 per cent of delegates responding that the Australian Vegetables Industry Conference 2007 was either good or excellent, many are looking ahead to the next congress in 2009, writes Hannah Burns.

The Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2007 was held in Sydney in May and June attracting more than 500 delegates from Australia and overseas.

The conference focused on consumers, asking delegates how the vegetable industry can meet consumer needs and desires. It also challenged the industry to have vegetables reclaim their position as a consumer priority.

Ninety-five per cent of delegates rated the trade show as either good or excellent.

Keynote speakers on the first morning included Michael Luscombe, CEO Woolworths; David Palmer, managing director MLA and Nick Rodd, director menu management McDonald's Australia.

Another highlight was Matt O'Neill, nutritionist and director for SmartShape. Matt presented delegates with practical and simple ways to promote their produce, and stressed the importance of making vegetables fun for consumers.

In the afternoon, delegates heard from speakers across the supply-chain, including Martin Kneebone, director freshlogic; Matt Brown, director Matt Brown's Greens; Michael Simonetta, CEO Perfection Fresh and Rob Robson, CEO One Harvest.

The second day of the conference saw Professor Peter Cullen deliver a thought-

provoking presentation on water reform, with suggestions for how the vegetable industry should address the issue. Delegates also heard from Robert Belcher, chair for Sustainable Agricultural Communities Australia, while members of the Australian Vegetables Industry Development Group (AVIDG) provided an update on the progress of VegVision 2020.

Informative and informal

The R&D Innovation Showcase included vegetable, fresh potato, processed potato, onion and general streams and was a hit with growers. The streams gave delegates access to the latest research and explained how research findings could be applied on-farm. It also gave delegates the opportunity to discuss issues of importance with leading researchers and overseas experts in a smaller, relaxed setting.

Many delegates commented that the informative conference was an invaluable opportunity to network. They were impressed with the caliber of speakers and the issues covered.

The trade show boasted 36 exhibitors, offering the latest innovation and products from agricultural suppliers, seed companies, government bodies and industry associations. Ninety-five per cent of delegates rated the trade show as either good or excellent.

The social program was a huge success, with the majority of delegates arriving early

to attend the welcome cocktail reception. The National Industry Biosecurity Plans for the vegetable, potato and onion industries were unveiled on the evening by the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Conall O'Connell. Trade exhibition drinks on the second evening of the conference attracted many delegates, who took the opportunity to peruse the exhibition and converse with peers.

The conference gala dinner was held on the final night of the conference with more than 300 delegates attending. Following two jam-packed days, the dinner was an opportunity to relax, network and celebrate the achievements of the finalists and winners of the 2007 National Vegetable Industry Awards.

Ninety per cent of delegates rated the conference as either good or excellent, and 82 per cent indicated they would attend another national vegetable industry conference.

The next Australian Vegetable Industry Conference will be held in 2009. 



Speaker presentations and profiles can be found on the conference website at www.vegieconf.com.au.





Marilyn Steiner and Stephen Goodwin, shortlisted for the Researcher of the Year award, with Lucy Keatinge, industry services manager vegetables at Horticulture Australia



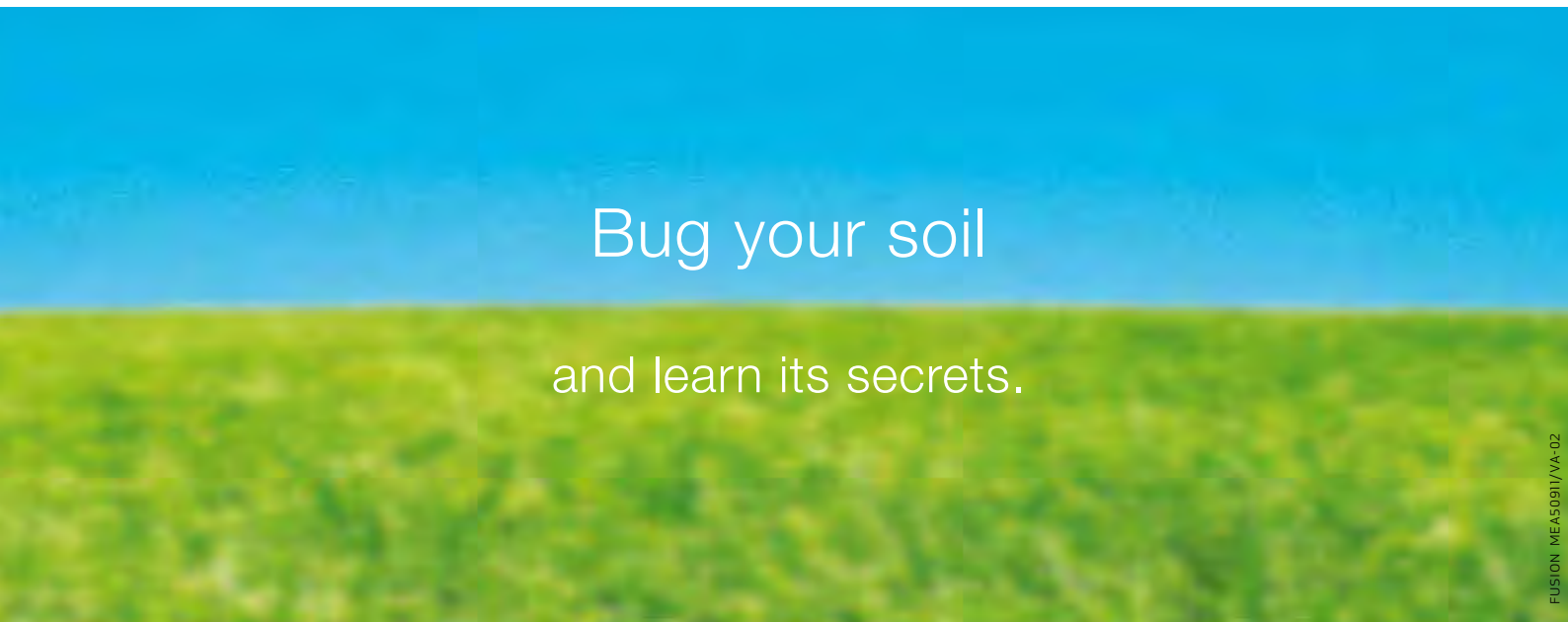
Nick Rodd, director menu management for McDonald's Australia, said that McDonald's intended to include more vegetables on its menu

Ninety per cent of delegates rated the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2007 as either good or excellent.

"The conference was a great opportunity to connect with fellow growers from distant growing regions."—NSW grower

"Fantastic exposure. Looking forward to the next one."—trade exhibitor

"Well organised, topical and challenging. Well done!"—Vic grower



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Meeting vegetables halfway

Marketing to local consumers and targeting foreign markets are crucial components for the vegetable industry's future success.

David Palmer, managing director Meat and Livestock Australia, said the Australian red-meat industry is ready and willing to partner with the vegetable industry



"Through advertising you incite people who don't agree with your point of view; the knock-on effect for further media is just sensational."

The Australian vegetable and meat industries share the common goal of encouraging consumers to have a balanced diet, said David Palmer, managing director Meat and Livestock Australia, at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2007.

David informed delegates that the Australian red-meat industry sees the Australian vegetable industry as a partner on the plate, and that a balanced diet for consumers means that both industries need to work together.

"The plate is the centre of the table and I'd like to think we can share that plate together," he said.

David said that the Australian red-meat industry invests solidly beyond the farm gate to promote its product locally. International markets are also crucial, as 99.7 per cent of the world's population lives outside Australia.

"If we don't back our product in our home market, which is our largest and most loyal market, we can't expect anyone else to do so. The investment in our industry beyond the farm gate, primarily through producer levies, has been significant," he said.

During the past 15 years, the Australian red-meat industry has invested heavily in a science-based eating-quality program, which has cost about \$60 million in industry outlays.

Shifting behaviour

"Community trust shapes consumers' behaviour. Their behaviour is very much shaped by the trust they may or may not hold in your product," said David.

"We have to be trusted and believable in what we do and how we respond. When issues confront the industry we must have good leaders who take control to arrest the issues and concerns. Community trust is like a bank, you have to put in deposits all the time to win the hearts, minds and confidence of the community. When something goes wrong, and you can be certain that things will go wrong, you get these massive

withdrawals from the trust bank, so you have to be on the front foot—keep putting those deposits in there.

"In the US about half the food dollar is spent outside the home; in Australia it's about 35 per cent. The Australian figure seems to have plateaued a bit, and may be coming down as people are now eating at home more often."

He added that in a response to the obesity epidemic, Australia is experiencing a resurgence of home values, which includes increased preparation of meals at home.

To market, to market

Marketing is of huge importance to the Australian red-meat industry.

"We break up our outlays, half into marketing, half into research and development. We've amalgamated all marketing and R&D initiatives into one outfit, so we have a marketing driven R&D program and an R&D driven marketing program. The synergies and linkages between R&D and marketing are really powerful," said David.

"We've felt for many years now that nutrition has been a great story not properly told. It's only been in recent times that we've been telling that story, one that consumers are responding to. The vegetables industry has an equally potent and powerful proposition that we'd love to partner with.

"Through advertising you incite people who don't agree with your point of view; the knock-on effect for further media is just sensational."

The bottom line:

- The Australian red-meat industry sees the vegetable industry as a partner, not a competitor.
- Foreign markets must be targeted as Australia accounts for only 0.3 per cent of the world's population.
- Marketing should encourage local consumers to eat more vegetables as part of a balanced diet.



Not a drop to waste

As water availability becomes less reliable, annual cropping may be the best way forward for growers.

"I don't know much about vegetables but I do know a bit about water," said Professor Peter Cullen, commissioner for the National Water Commission, to delegates at the Vegetable Industry Conference 2007.

"You're an important part of the water industry because you provide critically important commodities for our communities," he said.

Peter talked to delegates about the realities of Australia's water crisis.

"In my view, Australia's climate is changing. We've been on a journey of water reform since 1994 but it's been remarkably slow and patchy."

After studying stream-flow records, Peter said that Australia's dry spell started in 1990.

"For many of the rivers I have looked at, the inflow has dropped at least 40 per cent. As the landscape dries we get exposed to mega bushfires. After forests have burned, run-off is increased because there is no vegetation to capture water. As undergrowth develops you get a reduction in stream flow coming out of those catchments that might last 30 or 40 years," he said.

"It's not just rainfall that's the problem. We've mismanaged water in the whole

water cycle. Farm dams can capture up to 60 per cent of the surface run off. It's the same story with ground water—if you suck out too much ground water, you will dry up your stream."

The age of reforms

The water reform process started in 1994, when there was the cap on extraction from the Murray-Darling Basin. Since then, the Living Murray, the 2004 Water Initiative, and the Prime Minister's plan for water security in 2007 have all been released.

"Farm dams can capture up to 60 per cent of the surface run off. It's the same story with ground water—if you suck out too much ground water, you will dry up your stream."

"There will be less water available for agriculture. Many growers are on the outside of urban areas, and there will be increasing pressure on many of you from those urban communities. Similarly, with governments seeking water for the environment, it's going to become more competitive," he said.


Water prices will rise but there will be an increased availability of recycled water for agriculture. However, as state governments consider using recycled water for drinking water, this option may not be available for much longer.

Sharing the blame

Peter said that rice growers and urban dwellers were not deserving of all the blame.

"We're all wasting water; we all have to do better. Water will become less reliable, so you'll have to be more opportunistic about what you plant and how you use it when water is available or as you judge when water is likely to be available. That will give an advantage to annual cropping, rather than permanent tree cropping and grapes," he said.

"The smart water-user who survives over the next 20 years is going to be much more adroit at managing the risks of water. You're used to managing the risks of prices and other considerations, you're going to have to build water risk into your thinking, perhaps more than you have in the past.

"Vegetables growers will be competing with everyone else, everyone wants special exemption as water restrictions tighten, but really, we haven't got enough water to exempt anyone." 

The bottom line:

- Growers will need to become more opportunistic about their water growth.
- Exemptions from water restrictions are unlikely.
- Growers will experience increased competition for water from urban dwellers and governments.

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Vegetable sculptures at the Organic Crop Protection's 'trade-show stand



Celebrity chef Georghina Damm of Damm Fine Foods was Master of Ceremonies at the launch of the National Industry Biosecurity Plans for the vegetable, potato and onion industries



Joanne Thomas-Ward, executive officer Onions Australia and Dr Ryan Wilson, program manager at Plant Health Australia at the trade show



(From Damian



(From left) Matt O'Neill, nutritionist and director for SmartShape, Nick Rodd, director menu management for McDonald's Australia and David Palmer, managing director Meat and Livestock Australia, in a panel discussion with delegates



The Vegetable Industry Conference 2007 was a fantastic opportunity for delegates to learn more about issues facing the industry, network with peers, honor the industry's finest growers and researchers, and catch up with friends.



Young Grower of the Year, Danny Trandos (left) and Researcher of the Year, Dennis Phillips, celebrate their respective wins at the Vegetable Industry Awards 2007

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Energy, Mineral Resources and State Development, Ian Macdonald



(left) Australian Grown director Neil Summerson, Australian Grown NSW manager Schroder and Australian Grown chief executive Ian Harrison at the Vegetable Industry Awards 2007 gala dinner





Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, was special guest at the Vegetable Industry Awards 2007 Gala Dinner.

Industry champions take centre stage

The Australian vegetable industry recognised five of its most progressive and innovative growers and researchers at the AUSVEG Vegetable Industry Awards Gala Dinner in Sydney on 31 May.

The awards dinner recognised the efforts of the award finalists and announced the winners of the NAB Agribusiness Grower of the Year, Young Grower of the Year, Researcher of the Year, Brisbane Produce Markets Innovative Marketing Award and the AUSVEG Chairman's Award.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, attended the dinner as special guest and was joined by more than 350 industry guests on the night to toast this year's award finalists and winners.

AUSVEG chairman Michael Badcock congratulated the finalists and winners for their outstanding achievements within the industry.

"Professional industries recognise their best people and that's what the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards are all about," he said.

"On behalf of the Australian vegetable industry I wholeheartedly congratulate every winner and finalist for their commitment to excellence within our industry."

AUSVEG Vegetable Industry Awards Winners 2007

AUSVEG congratulates the following:

- **NAB Agribusiness Grower of the Year**
—Dino Musolino, South Australian vegetable grower.
- **Young Grower of the Year**
—Danny Trandos, Western Australian vegetable grower.
- **Researcher of the Year**
—Dennis Phillips, Department of Agriculture WA.
- **Brisbane Produce Market Innovative Marketing Award**
—John Said, Victorian vegetable grower.
- **AUSVEG Chairman's Award**
—Ian Young, Tasmanian vegetable grower.



VEGETABLE INDUSTRY AWARDS 2007



For more information: Visit www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au.



Vegetable Industry Awards Winners 2007



Dino Musolino accepts the NAB Agribusiness Grower of the Year Award 2007 at the Vegetable Industry Awards Gala Dinner



Danny Trandos (left), Young Grower of the Year 2007, accepts his awards from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran



Dennis Phillips accepts the Researcher of the Year Award 2007 at the Vegetable Industry Awards Gala Dinner

NAB Agribusiness Grower of the Year Award

Sponsored by NAB Agribusiness

2007 Winner: Dino Musolino (SA)

Dino's focus is on innovation. Winner of the 2004 South Australian Premier's Service to Industry Achievement Award, Dino is among the leading hydroponic lettuce growers in Australia. His company markets a range of ready-to-eat packs including salads, stir fries and lettuces. Dino plans to market new product lines such as living herbs and ready-to-eat microwaveable vegetable packs.

"Winning the award was absolutely a surprise. We knew some of our business practices were good but we didn't realise that, across Australia, we'd come out on top. It's an achievement to be proud of and something we will include on all our printed material, product packaging and uniforms," said Dino.

"Much praise must go to the team at Hi-Tech Hydroponics group; without them we would not have achieved as much as we did. I'd also like to mention the dedication and commitment of my operations manager, Dominic Tripodi, and the support of my family."

Young Grower of the Year Award

2007 Winner: Danny Trandos (WA)

Danny runs a hydroponic farm in Western Australia and has travelled the world to research irrigation, fertigation and climate control. During the past two years, with the assistance of his father Harry, he has helped form the Hydroponic Growers Association of Western Australia. Danny has worked in conjunction with Woolworths to develop new product lines and he regularly attends public meetings and seminars to help advance the industry.

"Winning the AUSVEG Young Grower of the Year Award was a surreal feeling. All the hard work and dedication of everyone at Trandos Hydroponic Growers helped me achieve this, as did the dedication of the Trandos family stemming back three generations," said Danny.

"I hope this award will inspire young growers around Australia to get involved with this dynamic and innovative industry. We are pushed harder everyday—if it's not prices, it's the environment—but I like the challenges and see a bright future in agriculture. The business environment is changing; you have to ride the peaks well and the troughs better. It's about successfully reinventing your business all the time."

Researcher of the Year Award

2007 Winner: Dennis Phillips (WA)

A senior development officer at the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food, Dennis is involved in the management of applied research and development projects in collaboration with the vegetable and strawberry industries. Dennis's recent work assisted growers who were forced to phase out the continuous use of raw chicken manure as fertiliser. Through trials on grower's properties he demonstrated that lettuce and a range of other leafy and brassica vegetables could be grown successfully using mineral fertilisers only.



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34 Vegetable Industry Awards Winners 2007

vegetables australia • volume 3.1 • july/august 2007



John Said (centre), Brisbane Produce Markets Innovative Marketing Award winner 2007, with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran (left) and NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Energy Mineral Resources and State Development, Ian Macdonald (right)



Matthew Young (centre) accepts the AUSVEG Chairman's Award 2007 on behalf of his father, Ian, with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran (left) and AUSVEG chairman Mike Badcock (right)

Brisbane Produce Markets Innovative Marketing Award

Sponsored by Brisbane Markets Limited

2007 Winner:
John Said (VIC)

John's company, Fresh Select, specialises in the wholesale distribution and export of leafy vegetables and brassicas. The company has implemented the supply of bagged lettuces to Coles supermarkets over the past three years. Working closely with his suppliers, John identified and improved harvesting techniques with the design and construction of purpose-built harvest aids to reduce costs and improve yields.

"It was a tremendous feeling of satisfaction and gratitude to be not only recognized but also able to enjoy the award with my peers and those who helped make it possible. The challenge now is to continue improving, especially in the area of pricing architecture from production to retail, so the whole supply chain can keep benefiting," said John.

"There is no doubt in my mind that we are heading in the right direction. We have the support of industry and we continue to respect all stake holders within the supply chain."

AUSVEG Chairman's Award

Sponsored by AUSVEG Ltd

2007 Winner:
Ian Young (TAS)

Ian has represented Tasmanian vegetable growers for more than 20 years. He began as the Sweet Corn Growers' Committee chairman for the McCain grower group, and later joined the TFGA Vegetable Council. Ian gathered support for the TFGA Fair Dinkum Food Campaign, which culminated in a tractor rally outside Parliament House, Canberra. He was elected to the AUSVEG board five years ago. Overseas at the time the awards were announced, Ian's son, Matthew, collected the award on his behalf.

"The AUSVEG Chairman's Award recognises people who have contributed to our industry, and I'm proud to have been recognised for my efforts. I know the other award finalists and what they have accomplished, so I'm thrilled to have been chosen," said Ian.

"I'm honoured to sit beside last year's winner, Figaro Natoli, knowing what he has done for the industry. My son collected the award, and I'd like to thank AUSVEG for flying up my family to attend the dinner. This was organised by my wife behind the scene, as I was unaware I'd won."





Participants in the 2006 tour benefited from their exposure to a range of on- and off-farm business practices and appreciated the opportunity to network with their American counterparts

Levy payers to tour California

Growers have the opportunity to visit farms in Los Angeles and attend the PMA Fresh Summit Conference as part of a National-Vegetable-Levy-subsidised tour.

The Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has endorsed a proposal for an escorted tour by National Vegetable Levy growers to the United States in October this year. A similar, highly successful, growers' tour was conducted at the same time last year.

Ten growers will leave Sydney on Saturday 6 October and return on Friday 19 October. AUSVEG will appoint a tour leader for the tour's duration.

The tour, which is open to all National Vegetable Levy payers and has no age restriction, will include visits to farms in the prime California vegetable growing regions of the Salina Valley and Ventura, north of Los Angeles.

The second component of the tour is attendance at the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit Conference in Houston, Texas. A detailed itinerary is available on the AUSVEG website.

Benefit for growers

Participants from similar tours in previous years have unanimously praised the tours' values. Growers benefited from:

- Their exposure to a range of on- and off-farm businesses practices
- Networking within the tour group, with their American counterparts, and with a selection of the 8,000 delegates who attend the Fresh Summit Conference
- Being introduced to technological innovations, and latest farm techniques and practices, and
- Forum participation to discuss topical issues with their Californian host-farmers, including irrigation techniques and research, innovative marketing, packaging, consumer trends, on-farm quality systems, and the use of use of water, pests and hygiene.

Subsidised cost

The cost of the tour will be substantially sponsored by the National Vegetable Levy. Growers will be required to make a contribution towards the cost of the tour, anticipated to be from \$2,500 to \$5,000. All air and land travel (including travel to and from Sydney, the tour departure-point), share accommodation, PMA conference registration and some meals will be included. A tour guide familiar with the Californian vegetable industry will join the tour for the farm visits.

The bottom line:

- Tour encompasses visiting Californian farms and attending the PMA Fresh Summit Conference.
- The tour is open to all National Vegetable Levy payers.
- The National Vegetable Levy will heavily subsidise the tour for participants.

i AUSVEG is now calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for tour participants. For further details about this tour, including the selection process, visit: www.ausveg.com.au.

The application form and selection criteria can be obtained from AUSVEG, the AUSVEG website or from the vegetable Industry Development Officer in your state.

EOI must be submitted by close of business Monday 30 July 2007.

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Functional foods provide competitive

Could a new range of vegetables known to have enhanced health benefits be the key to competing against Chinese vegetable imports? Youna Angevin-Castro investigates.

A team of trans-Tasman scientists are working to develop a range of 'super' vegetables designed to impart proven health benefits to people who consume them.

The project, which operates under the banner 'Vital Vegetables', became operational in 2003, and is a cooperative R&D effort between the Australian and New Zealand vegetable industries, the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, the New Zealand Institute for Crop & Food Research, and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in Knoxfield.

Dr Rod Jones, team leader plant physiology at DPI Knoxfield, has been closely involved with Vital Vegetables, and explains that the outcome of the project is to produce a range of commercially available 'functional foods'—fresh foods that may provide a health benefit beyond the traditional nutrients they contain—to Australian and New Zealand consumers.

"Vital Vegetables grew from a number of driving forces. One was the growth of China as a major competitor in vegetable production. It became apparent that imports from China had the potential to swamp the Australian market," Rod said.

"Vital Vegetables is an opportunity for Australian vegetable growers to develop a point of difference for their produce. By providing consumers with a range of vegetables that are grown locally and have the added advantage of helping protect against major diseases, such as cancer, the Australian industry will be able to differentiate itself in the eyes of consumers."

Understanding the market

With such an ambitious objective, an important aspect of the project was to gain an understanding of consumers' likely reaction to new functional foods derived from horticultural products. The first step was to conduct an extensive market research analysis of consumer attitudes, beliefs and likely behaviours.

"The number one reason for buying particular horticultural products was taste; vegetables cannot be sold on health benefits alone."

The research was conducted prior to the commencement of the project and used a variety of approaches, including consumer focus groups, a questionnaire and opinion leader research.

"Through the market research, we discovered that consumers delivered some very consistent messages. Consumers are increasingly taking steps to adjust their diet to positively influence their health and well-being. Additionally, we found that consumers look upon vegetable products as a good source of foods that may help prevent the onset of disease."

The research identified that consumers of all ages had a high awareness of the role of vegetables and fruit in health, well-being, disease prevention and treatment. While few consumers surveyed had heard of the term 'functional food', after the term was

explained to them, 61 per cent of respondents indicated that they would deliberately buy functional foods.

The research also unveiled consumer attitudes to processes and outcomes of manipulating food products, and indicated that consumers were particularly concerned about the use of genetic engineering in the creation of functional foods. In contrast, 84 per cent of respondents felt comfortable with the notion of improving foods through natural breeding methods. As a consequence, GE is not used in Vital Vegetables.

"Some of the more interesting findings were the reasons consumers gave for buying fruit and vegetables. While health benefits were high on the list, the number one reason for buying particular horticultural products was taste; vegetables cannot be sold on health benefits alone," said Rod.

This finding heavily influenced subsequent research, as scientists, such as Rod and his team at DPI, developed the next generation of functional foods.

Combined expertise

Since the commencement of the Vital Vegetables project in 2003, the project has developed a number of novel vegetable products, including new salad mixes, sprouts, a form of brassica and a high-health broccoli variety named 'Booster'.

"Working with New Zealand has provided tremendous advantages. At DPI we have a long history of working with industry in applied areas such as growing and postharvest processes. In contrast, New Zealand is recognised for its strengths in bioefficacy,



advantage to growers

the effectiveness of compounds on human function, and pure physiology, the study of functions of living organisms. This makes for a fantastic collaboration from a scientific perspective," said Rod.

"Working with New Zealand has also added to our in-house scientific capabilities, particularly with regards to compound analyses. For example, we are now able to analyse important phytochemicals—also known as plant health compounds—very quickly, to very high analytical standards."

Though keen to produce the healthiest vegetables possible, Rod and his team have considered the more practical aspects of vegetable production and have used their own research in vegetable production and

postharvest technology to ensure that the new generation of functional foods fulfils the expectations of growers.

"Unless these new varieties are competitive with respect to yield and shelf life, there is little chance that growers will grow them instead of more conventional varieties."

"We are aware that unless these new varieties are competitive with respect to yield and shelf life, there is little chance that growers will grow them instead of more conventional varieties. We also taste test all our prospective new varieties—if they don't

taste at least as good as existing varieties, we don't proceed any further."

The next stage to the Vital Vegetables project is to implement a plan for the successful marketing and commercialisation of the new varieties. The team is also keen to acquire the right to make specific health claims about the benefits of eating Vital Vegetables branded produce.

"Health claims are strictly regulated through Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and rightly so, but we believe that we have a product that adheres to FSANZ's criteria for health claims, so we may choose to give it a go if our commercial partners believe a health claim will deliver a market advantage," said Rob.

Continues on next page

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Critical success factors

The market research conducted as part of the Vital Vegetables project found that, in order to optimise the chances of market success of functionally-enhanced vegetables, a number of key factors had to be satisfied:

- Must not compromise on taste, quality or appearance but provide a package of attributes.
- Be in a fresh, unprocessed form.
- Accompanying health, nutritional or functional claims should be within acceptable limits and endorsed by a trusted, independent scientific authority.
- Produced through natural breeding and/or farming practices without use of GE technology.
- Include an informative label sanctioned by a trusted authority.
- Maintain a price premium within a band of 10 to 30 per cent of the 'normal' retail price.
- Develop a high level of distribution in supermarkets and independent retailers with a simple description and differentiation for the category.

A worthy investment

In designing a People Development Investment Plan for the Australian vegetable industry, a serious commitment is being made to the industry's most important commodity—its people.

The position of People Development Manager has been established by the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group (AVIDG) through a grant to AUSVEG from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). It is a key plank of VegVision 2020, the industry-wide strategic plan for the sustainable future growth of the Australian vegetable industry.

Dianne Fullelove has extensive experience in the horticulture and education industries, and in accepting the position, she will review existing business skills and training programs and develop a People Development Investment Plan for implementation in 2008 and beyond.

"Vegetable growing is a dynamic, ever changing role that requires the ability to produce a healthy meal for Australians while managing a successful business."

"The challenge in all primary industries, including the vegetable industry, is to significantly increase the capacity of the people involved in their businesses and industry. Vegetable growing is a dynamic, ever changing role that requires the ability to produce a healthy meal for Australians while managing a successful business. To meet these challenges, vegetable growers need to 'grow' themselves. My role in people development aims to help growers develop both themselves and their businesses," said Dianne.

"I am passionate about the horticulture industry and training in particular, so this role is a good fit for me. In Australia the median age of farmers is increasing so it is important to get young people involved in the industry and trained in leadership and essential business skills."

Experience fills the gap

Dianne is well placed to tackle the project, having previously worked as a consultant to industry organisations such as Horticulture Australia Council and Growcom. She was also the executive officer for Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers for three years.

"I will conduct an audit of training already offered to growers, how it is provided, and what growers want from their training to identify any gaps," said Dianne.

"I will work closely with a variety of people and organisations across supply chains and throughout the country—from government to growers."

Chair of AVIDG, Richard Bovill, said the project, one of seven Foundation Projects outlined in the industry's Taking Stock and Setting Directions report, will ensure a rich source of skilled and informed growers to take the industry into the future.

The project aims to engage organisations to form an investment plan for people development and foster ongoing commitment from the industry to build long-term leadership and training capacity.



Dianne Fullelove
People Development Manager AUSVEG
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Shane Broad in the cover-crop trial

Take cover to restore the balance

Emulating nature's biodiversity in a commercial crop environment can help decrease reliance on pesticides, discovers Jodie Powell.

Cover cropping may be one way to reduce pesticide usage for the impact of diamondback moths on broccoli production, according to a thesis completed recently by Tasmanian PhD student Shane Broad.

The idea for Shane's research grew from his experience on his family's farm at Gawler, in north-west Tasmania, and a desire to achieve a practical outcome. He began looking at the effects of cover crops for brassica vegetable systems about four years ago.

"At the moment we cultivate the soil and plant one crop over a big area. We take away nature's checks and balances and attempt to control pests, diseases and weeds with chemicals."

"I wanted to devise a solution and put together a package, which is why I looked at how it could be done as a whole, rather than it being just an academic exercise," Shane said.

A PhD student with the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania, Shane began his studies with an Agricultural Science Degree at the age of 22.

He'd worked on the family farm before starting university and then worked for the Tasmanian Government before returning to university to complete his PhD. This allowed him to spearhead his own research, instead of joining an established project.

"I was able to research for research sake, rather than having a specific outcome that needed to be generated," Shane said.

Check resistance

Keen to undertake research that could have a practical application, Shane looked at the impact of diversity in cropping systems, with the aim of reducing reliance on chemicals to prevent the spread of diamondback moths.

"At the moment we cultivate the soil and plant one crop over a big area. From a biological sense this does not mimic nature, which is quite diverse, with lots of plants and insects having checks and balances. We take away these checks and balances and attempt to control pests, diseases and weeds with chemicals," Shane said.

"Insects and diseases can adapt very quickly and overcome chemical control—resistance is the problem.

"I found after my first year that many of the ideas behind diversity and beneficials are faith-based—they're great ideas but they're hard to make work in a practical sense."

It was the difficulty of generating sufficient biodiversity in an artificial environment that progressed Shane's research to look specifically at the impact of cover crops on diamondback moths in brassica crops. In particular he used rye as a cover crop for broccoli.

The main problem with diamondback moths in broccoli crops is as a contaminant, especially in the fresh produce market. They find their way into broccoli in the field and show up in the supermarket, which can be off-putting for consumers.

"That's the major issue, rather than them devouring the plants, although in extreme circumstances that can happen. In Tasmania, diamondback moths come

from mainland Australia on favourable winds—they arrive en masse and overwhelm biological controls.

"The challenge is that diamondback moths will eventually become resistant to every chemical that is applied."

Growers currently use a combination of chemicals and integrated pest management to reduce the problem but Shane said it was likely that the moths could develop a resistance to even the most complex chemicals.

"It's under control at the moment but if the effectiveness of chemicals declines, I will have people knocking on my door," Shane said.

Go to ground

The rye cover crop was planted three months before the main broccoli crops.

"I grew it at high density, sprayed it with Roundup and then rolled it, planting the broccoli in one pass using a prototype machine I built. There is an opportunity to control the rye mechanically at the right growth stage without herbicides but it's a big risk." If the rye is not cut at precisely the right stage, it can overwhelm the broccoli crop.

By introducing rye as a cover crop, Shane found that growers could significantly reduce the impact of diamondback moths and cabbage aphids, while adequately controlling weeds. Using rye meant that insecticides needed to be sprayed only once per crop.

He also looked at growing broccoli within rows of potatoes but found inter-cropping—whether combined with a rye cover crop or not—had no impact on diamondback moths.

Diamondback moth larvae and pupae



“Ground cover is the driver. When there’s bare soil, my evidence showed that diamondback moths and aphids could find the broccoli more effectively.

“The disclaimer is that while cover cropping slightly improved the quality of the broccoli, it delayed the harvest by about a week, which is not significant, but it reduced the yield and the gross margin by 7 per cent.”

Shane said that this figure is in the range of acceptability, though it does need to be improved.

“The gross margin analysis took everything into account but there might be a price premium for reducing chemical use and there is scope to improve the system, which would include improving the prototype roller/transplanter.

“Currently, commercial growers are not that concerned about resistance because they have implemented integrated pest management—there’s not a big enough driver for people to take it up, but from a sustainability point of view, it is way out in front.”



Broccoli grown without the protection of a cover crop may be more susceptible to damage caused by diamondback moths

Shane Broad’s trial incorporated the use of rye as a cover crop to protect broccoli



The bottom line:

- Cover crops may help protect commercial crops from pests.
- Cover crops emulate nature’s checks and balances.
- Yield and gross margin of commercial crops may be reduced by cover crops.

Exports stabilise, imports remain a concern

Recent figures from the ABS indicate a worrying trend is continuing, writes Ian James, chief economist AUSVEG.

Vegetable Imports by Product Class

	9 months to March 2006 \$M	9 months to March 2007 \$M	% change 2007 on 2006
Total	276.6	320.0	15.7
Processed	107.3	118.8	10.8
Frozen	83.4	100.4	20.4
Other	54.5	66.4	21.8
Fresh and Chilled	31.4	34.4	9.6
Top Twelve Imports			
Processed Tomatoes	40.8	45.2	10.8
Frozen Potatoes	19.9	34.2	71.9
Dried Vegetables	25.1	29.6	17.9
Vegetable Seeds for Sowing	20.4	23.1	13.2
Frozen Vegetable Mixes	18.5	17.8	-3.8
Processed Vegetable Mixes	19.3	15.6	-19.2
Frozen Peas	12.1	14.1	16.5
Vegetables Preserved in Vinegar	10.6	11.7	10.4
Processed Potatoes	8.0	10.3	28.8
Tuber Vegetables	5.7	10.3	80.7
Fresh Garlic	7.3	9.2	26.0
Tomato Sauces	6.7	9.0	34.3

Source of data: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Traditionally, the Australian vegetable industry has been domestically focused. Exports of fresh vegetables are usually about 7 per cent of total official production. This contrasts with Australia's other agriculture industries, where the majority of production is exported. Nonetheless, exports have provided growers with an important source of income. In 2001-2002, fresh vegetable exports were valued at \$217 million, while processed and semi-processed vegetable exports were valued at \$130 million. Likewise, vegetable imports have been relatively low. This was particularly the case for fresh vegetables, where they barely registered in comparison with domestic production. In 2001-2002, Australia ran a

positive vegetable trade balance—exports exceeded imports by \$66 million.

Imports from Australia's top five source countries—New Zealand, China, Italy, America and Thailand—all increased. China has overtaken Italy as the second major source country for imports.

However, over the past four years vegetable growers' competitive position on world markets has deteriorated. Exports to key Asian markets have collapsed and imports have risen sharply. Last financial year

(2005-2006), Australia's vegetable industry ran a trade deficit of \$125 million—that's a \$191 million turnaround in just four years.

Data relating to the first nine months of fiscal year 2006-2007 shows a further deterioration in the trade balance.

The good, the bad and the aggrieved

Encouragingly, the value of vegetable exports has stabilised. Indeed, there has been a \$1.5 million increase compared with the corresponding period in 2005-2006. The hemorrhaging of exports into key Asian markets has stopped with the increased value of broccoli exports to Singapore. New market growth in recent years, particularly of carrots to the Middle East, is continuing. Vegetable juices to Japan and fresh tomatoes to New Zealand continue to grow and there has been a recovery of onion exports to Europe and prepared frozen vegetables to Japan.

Export casualties remain, especially where labour content is high, such as with cauliflowers and asparagus. However, the overall export picture is one of an industry adjusting to new world realities, concentrating on its strengths and focusing on niche markets.

The major problem has been mounting imports, which have increased 15.7 per cent for the nine months to March 2007 compared with the corresponding period last year.

The increase is from a number of countries, which suggests increased specialisation brought on by rapid globalisation. Imports from Australia's top five source countries—New Zealand, China, Italy, America and Thailand—all increased. The largest growth in imports has been from China, which has seen both a dollar value and percentage increase. China has overtaken Italy as the second major source country for imports.



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The increased sourcing of vegetables from America and Thailand is a concern. Australian vegetable growers can feel justifiably aggrieved by the lack of benefits derived from Free Trade Agreements with these countries. This is particularly so for the Australia-Thailand Free Trade Agreement, as Australian negotiators allowed Thailand to retain high levels of tariff protection on key Australian vegetable exports.

As in recent years, the major competitive threat from imports is from vegetable products rather than fresh vegetables. Frozen vegetable product imports have surged almost entirely due to frozen potato imports, which increased 72 per cent. This reflects the loss of significant processing contracts by Australian potato growers. Processed vegetable imports, which have remained flat in recent years, are also rising strongly, led by tomato products. Fresh vegetable import growth is largely confined to the garlic market.

Lessons to be learned

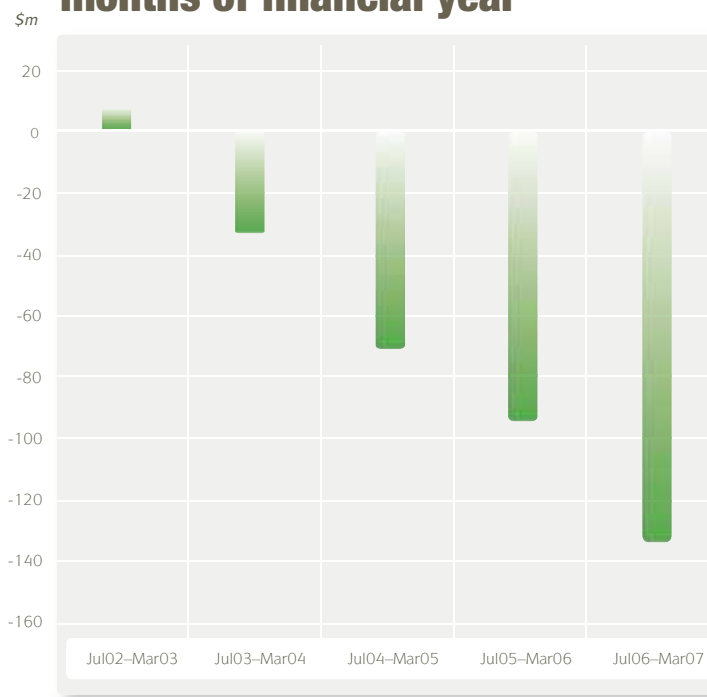
Export markets can be won but will most likely to be in vegetables where labour harvesting costs are low and Australian quality, packaging and presentation are superior.

In regards to imports, some issues affecting vegetable growers are beyond growers' control, for example, the global rationalisation of the semi-processed and processed industry sectors. The decline in the processed sector of the Australian vegetable industry is having a serious impact on Australian vegetable growers.

Comparative labour costs and a strong Australian dollar are hurting local growers. Nonetheless, the industry needs to respond positively to market realities. Being supply focused and ignoring market demand undermines returns to growers. New technology provides an opportunity to offset Australia's inability to compete against the lower labour costs in Asian countries but this technology requires increased produce output to justify the investment.

Growers need to concentrate on the issues beyond the farm gate. Effective liaison with operatives further along the supply chain is critical to success, as are smart marketing campaigns to shore up domestic markets and penetrate export markets.

Trade balance first nine months of financial year



The latest data reveals a continuing decline in the vegetable industry's trade performance
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Top 12 Source Countries – Vegetable Imports

	9 months to March 2006 \$M	9 months to March 2007 \$M	% change 2007 on 2006
Total	276.6	320.0	15.7
New Zealand	79.4	88.9	12.0
China	37.7	52.9	40.3
Italy	41.1	47.4	15.3
United States	26.2	27.9	6.5
Thailand	10.8	14.4	33.3
Netherlands	13.2	13.8	4.5
Turkey	11.3	11.7	3.5
Peru	5.9	6.4	8.5
India	4.7	5.6	19.1
Fiji	3.2	4.5	40.6
Germany	3.3	4.5	36.3
Belgium	4.1	4.2	2.4

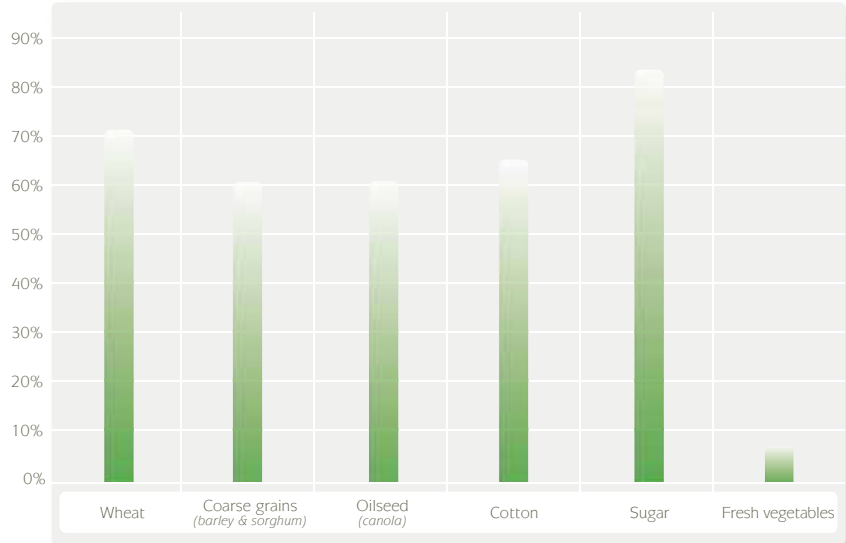
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

The Australian vegetable industry needs a strategic approach to trade issues. In the past, a great deal of trade in vegetables has been opportunistic. Some operators have successfully devised strategies that have enabled them to compete in world markets and grow their businesses substantially. These businesses, to quote a past Australian Prime Minister, are the lights on the hill that the rest of the industry must strive to emulate. 🌱

The bottom line:

- In four years, Australia's vegetable industry has gone from a positive trade balance of \$66 million, to a deficit of \$125 million.
- The value of vegetable exports has stabilised.
- The industry must move beyond opportunistic trade and think globally to target niche markets.

Exports as a percentage of production



Compared with other cropping industries, production has always been domestically focused
 Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics

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Communication is key to levy benefits

Expanded duties will help Craig Feutrill best meet the needs of the growers he represents, while cementing his commitment to R&D, writes Angela Brennan.



By his own admission, Craig Feutrill would not have remained South Australia's Vegetable Industry Development Officer for long if it were not for the growers. "They are the salt of the earth. The highlight of my job is working with the growers," he said.

The South Australian Farmers' Federation (SAFF) employed Craig as IDO in 1998. It was the first IDO position funded in Australia and he was appointed to run the Vegetable Industry Technology Coordinator project (VITC). The project was successful and his contract was renewed to 2008 with a much expanded duty statement.

"I aim to assist growers to take up new technologies, facilitate opportunities to access information and promote active participation in industry projects."

Since accepting the position, Craig has overcome any setbacks he's experienced and he keeps a careful eye on the future.

"Perhaps the only major concern is the announcement for zero water allocation for growers in the Murray-Darling Basin. We are yet to feel the full effect of this but I fear we will lose many producers and most will not return to farming when supplies are restored."

Bridging the divide

The role of the IDO in South Australia has evolved over the past nine years.

"Initially it was a fact-finding mission as to how, when and in what form growers wanted information, but these days I am largely responsible for effective information flow from R&D projects to growers," Craig said.

"The most important aspect of the job is identifying and representing growers' views at the state and national levels with respect to R&D while ensuring maximum benefit is gained from growers' levies and government contributions funding R&D.

"In the early years of the project we developed communication strategies and R&D proposal pathways that represented growers' views. We also focussed on identifying needs, getting the research done and relaying outcomes to the growers in a useful form."

Craig said that the transfer of information, derived from research projects and other information sources, is vital to driving positive change, growth and prosperity.

"I aim to assist growers to, among other things, take up new technologies, facilitate opportunities to access information and promote active participation in industry projects. With better understanding, growers can use the vegetable levy as an investment."

Craig works closely with relevant government and independent organisations. Among their achievements are the development of the South Australian minor-use program to ensure adequate, sustainable chemical use into the future, and the development of the South Australian Vegetable Strategic Development Plan. Additionally, Craig organised and led two grower tours to Israel and California where growers

looked at reclaimed water management and Greenhouse structures and production.

With a background in entomology and pest management, Craig worked extensively in the citrus industry before accepting the IDO position, running the Citrus Information Technology Transfer Groups (CITT) network around Australia. This network still functions in all states with the assistance of state IDOs.

Craig Feutrill works from the University of Adelaide Waite Campus at Urrbrae, in Adelaide. 

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Collective Bargaining making it easier to do business

Collective bargaining – making it easier to do business, whatever the size of your business

Collective bargaining enables businesses of all sizes, like those in the agribusiness sector, to work together co-operatively.

Small businesses can benefit by joining together to negotiate with a larger business, who is their common customer or supplier. Larger businesses can find it more efficient to negotiate directly with a group of small businesses rather than each small business individually.

Businesses can collectively bargain with other businesses as long as they get approval to do so from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

Recent Australian Government reforms to the collective bargaining processes under the Trade Practices Act have established a new **notification** process. This will make it simpler, quicker and cheaper for small businesses to

engage in collective bargaining.

The new notification process allows small business to commence collective bargaining, where it is in the public interest, in as little as 28 days following the lodgement of a valid notification with the ACCC.

In addition to this, the existing process of **authorisation**, which is how businesses originally could apply to engage in collective bargaining, has been improved as part of these new changes.

For further information on how collective bargaining can be used by your business, including the higher transaction threshold of \$5 million available to primary producers, under the notification process, visit our website or call the helpline number below.



To find out more about collective bargaining changes and other government initiatives for small business, visit www.business.gov.au



For information on collective bargaining processes go to www.accc.gov.au or call the ACCC small business helpline on 1300 302 021



Australian Government

Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources



Easy solution strips

Creating reservoirs of beneficials near crops can help growers reduce their reliance on chemical controls, writes Simon Adams.

Lettuce growers may soon have new options for managing pests, including the simple option of spreading composted chook manure, thanks to research investigating the extent and habits of pests in lettuce crops.

The project aims to find ways to increase predatory insect populations in lettuce crops, giving growers a complementary option to their existing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan.

Predatory insects, also known as beneficials, are roaming insects that feed on specific pests and their larvae. When pests are attracted to a crop, beneficials will follow and attack the pests, leaving the crop untouched.

"The main benefit for the grower is that we can attract certain species of beneficials to the farm," said project leader, Dr Paul Horne of IPM Technologies.

"There is a lag between the arrival of the pest and the arrival of the beneficial, which gives the pest an advantage. We hope to find a way to introduce the beneficial before the pest arrives," he said.

Creating havens (grassy strips) in paddocks before a new crop is planted enables beneficials to establish themselves before the pest is drawn to the crop.

"In particular, we are looking to capture brown lacewings, the most important beneficial. We're focusing on spring and autumn or when a farmer shifts to a new paddock," Paul said.

Chook manure attracts beneficials

Due to finish in 2008, the project involves conducting surveys about grower habits and soil trials. It was discovered that farmers who spread chook manure on their crops have higher populations of soil dwelling predatory mites than those who do not.

Chook manure attracts small flies (fungus gnats) that subsequently attract soil-dwelling predatory mites. These mites feed on a range of small insects, including pests such as thrips, which often drop to the soil to develop.

Initial surveys also revealed that Victorian lettuce crops have very low beneficial insect populations due to an insecticide drench that is used widely throughout the state.

The next stage of the project will assess the effectiveness of maintaining grassy strips in paddocks, which act as reservoirs of beneficials, by measuring how many beneficials transfer to a crop rather than remain on the strips.

"We've sampled the crops and they harbour a population that is beneficial when there's nothing in the paddock initially except that grass. The crop is planted beside established grassy strips—when we come to plant crops like Iceberg lettuce, it's an advantage having those strips there," Paul said.

A concern was that if the grassy strips seeded, this could lead to grass sprouting in the middle of the crop. Paul's investigations indicate that weeds are not a major problem if growers manage the strips by preventing the grasses from setting seed, either by herbicide or mechanical removal.

"Farmers have to make sure they manage the grassy strips and don't forget about them," he said.

Although growers may benefit greatly from increasing beneficial insect populations in their crops, Paul said that this is not a replacement for chemical controls or IPM, rather it is a complementary cultural method that enables pests to be controlled using less chemical control and a more natural resource.

"The method looks at artificially enhancing the biocontrol component of an IPM strategy; it is not a stand-alone control method."

The bottom line:

- Establish havens for beneficials before crops are planted.
- Chook manure can attract fungus gnats, which attract beneficials.
- Growers must manage grassy strips to prevent grasses setting seed.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers.
Project number: VG05008
Keywords: IPM strategies



away pests

Creating havens (grassy strips) in paddocks before a new crop is planted enables beneficials to establish themselves before the pest is drawn to the crop.

Beneficial bugs such as the brown lacewing attack pests, leaving the crop untouched



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New model spots the difference

A departure from calendar spraying has drastically reduced the number of sprays needed to protect brassica crops against white blister disease, writes Emma Reeves.



The National Vegetable Expo White Blister Forum was held in early May, hosted by DPI Victoria at Werribee

When white blister swept through broccoli and cauliflower crops in Werribee, Victoria, during the 2002 summer season, it was feared that an epidemic could wipe out the season's produce.

White blister, sometimes called white rust, affects many brassica vegetables, such as cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage. The latest research on disease management includes the development of guidelines for strategic spray applications and identifying disease-tolerant crops. The research, funded by Horticulture Australia (HAL), also indicates that evening irrigation exacerbates the disease.

"We are trying to get away from calendar spraying. During trials we have been able to get down to two sprays a crop instead of weekly spraying."

The research was discussed by Australian growers and scientists from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the United Kingdom, Canada and Holland as part of a forum, hosted by DPI Victoria at the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee in early May.

DPI Victoria scientists used weather data collected from around Australia to validate a white blister disease predictive model developed by Warwick University in the UK. The Brassica^{Spot} model details the conditions under which white blister thrives so growers can effectively time fungicide applications.

"We are trying to get away from calendar spraying. During trials we have been able to get down to two sprays a crop instead of weekly spraying," said DPI Victoria plant pathologist Joanna Petkowski.



Caleb Hurrel, technical officer DPI Victoria (left) and Joanna Petkowski, plant pathologist DPI Victoria, assess a trial crop at the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee in May



The bottom line

- Plant broccoli varieties that are most tolerant to the disease, such as Belstar and Grevillea.
- Use the Brassica^{Spot} Model to determine the best time to apply fungicides.
- White blister thrives in moist, warm conditions.



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Broccoli heads affected by white blister are not marketable and will be rejected during harvest


Growers can use the model to identify when their crops are most at risk. White blister thrives in summer conditions. "Higher temperatures and dew on the leaves at night create the perfect conditions to stimulate infection. In winter there is less infection as the night time temperatures drop to less than 8 degrees," said DPI Victoria plant pathologist Dr Liz Minchinton.

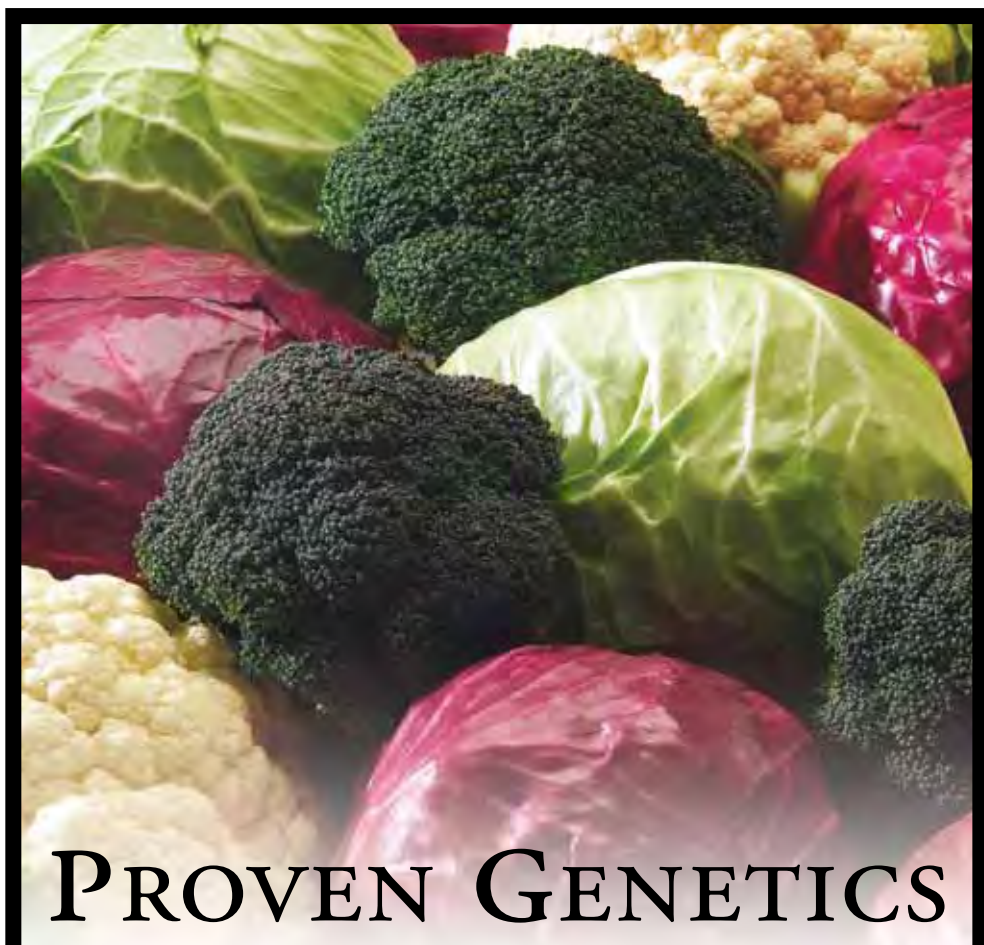
According to the model, registered sprays should be applied to crops only if white blister appears seven or more days after high-risk periods. Strategic, rather than calendar, spraying also saves growers labour, fuel and chemical costs. "If crops are sprayed often it can fuel resistance to the disease, which has started to happen at Werribee," said Liz.

Last year scientists from DPI Victoria, WA Agriculture and Peracto undertook extensive trials to identify tolerant broccoli varieties.

The researchers found broccoli varieties with a low incidence of white blister in:

- Victoria: Belstar, Legacy, Atomic and Grevillea
- Tasmania: Belstar, Grevillea, Ballistic and Ironman
- Western Australia: Belstar, Aurora, Atomic and Cobra.

DPI scientists plan to complete further disease modelling work to develop alternatives to classic fungicides and determine whether other brassica varieties, such as cabbage and Brussels sprouts, are also vulnerable to various subraces of the disease. Data will continue to be sourced from growers Australia-wide and the UK. 



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Industry development program under review

Industry development is a generic term that relates to an industry's capability to grow and implement strategic plans for research and development investment.

Five-step program

In brief, the steps of the industry development review are:

- 1** Review of materials and preparation of background report.
- 2** Preparation of Options Paper
- 3** Consultation on Options Paper (August 2007)
- 4** Inclusion of feedback from consultation and production of final report.
- 5** Final report and recommended steps of implementation presented to Vegetable Industry Advisory Group (September 2007).

Specific to the vegetable industry, industry development includes the employment of six state-based industry development officers (IDOs), an industry development manager, a communications manager and an economist. Projects conducted under industry development cover a range of activities, but often they focus on communication or transferring agronomic technology to producers.

An important management responsibility is to design and implement the organisational structure that best supports a business's strategy. Failure to achieve this results in inefficiency and lost opportunities for profit and growth.


Industry development is one of the largest investments from the National Vegetable Levy and has been an extremely successful program over the past decade. IDOs have been an invaluable in delivering research outcomes to growers. Similarly, growers have informed IDOs how they would like the levy to be invested.

While the program has been successful, the release of VegVision 2020 prompted a restructure of the industry development program to better deliver the goals of VegVision 2020.

A key consideration is an examination of whether current industry development activities align with strategies outlined in VegVision 2020. This will be assessed in two respects—alignment of strategies and alignment of strictures.

It is an axiom of business that an important management responsibility is to design and implement the organisational structure that best supports a business's strategy. Failure to achieve this results in inefficiency and lost opportunities for profit and growth.

To complete this task an independent consultant, Selwyn Heilbron and Associates, was appointed in late-June by AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia. The aim of this project is to develop an overarching vegetable industry development plan that aligns with VegVision 2020 and ensures any development activities match the plan.

This project is to be conducted by reviewing current programs, and analysis of and consultation with key industry participants. The latter is expected to occur in states in August 2007. 

i For more information: Contact Lisa Maguire, general manager AUSVEG, at <lisa.maguire@ausveg.com.au> or Lucy Keatinge, industry services manager vegetables HAL, at <Lucy.Keatinge@horticulture.com.au>



(From left) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Conall O'Connell, celebrity chef Georgina Damm of Damm Fine Foods, AUSVEG chairman Mike Badcock, Onions Australia chairperson Steve Rathjen and Plant Health Australia chairman Andrew Inglis at the launch of the National Industry Biosecurity Plans for the vegetable, potato and onion industries

Best offence against pests is a good defence

The launch of a new Industry Biosecurity Plan will help safeguard Australian vegetable growers and their crops

Plans to protect Australia's vegetable industry from the establishment of exotic plant pests and diseases were unveiled at the Vegetable Industry Conference 2007 in Sydney by Dr Conall O'Connell, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The National Vegetable Industry Biosecurity Plan (IBP) was launched in conjunction with similar plans for the potato and onion industries. These IBPs are the first nationally coordinated and consistent approaches to managing and reducing the risk of plant-pest incursions.

"The IBPs are a vital tool for Australia's vegetable, potato and onion industries in the fight against pests and diseases that pose a constant threat to sustainability, profitability and viability. They provide us with a blueprint for taking the next steps to reduce the risk of incursions, improve pest and disease diagnosis, and to develop contingency plans to deal with any outbreaks," said AUSVEG chairman Mike Badcock.

"An outbreak could be devastating for these valuable and growing industries, for local communities and for Australia's economy. Pests have the potential to affect production, causing financial losses to industry and negative impacts on regional economies. They also threaten markets currently valued at over AUD\$1.5 billion, as well as the environment."

Plant Health Australia (PHA) led the development of the IBPs in partnership with AUSVEG, Onions Australia, the Australian Government and the state and territory governments.

"The significant linkages now established through the IBPs will ensure that vegetable growers are well placed to manage these risks," said Mike.

World-class protection

PHA chairman Andrew Inglis said, "PHA is delighted with what has been achieved with the development of these plans. Together they contribute to world-class biosecurity

arrangements for managing and minimising risks, and responding effectively to any exotic pest threats across our plant industries."

The development of the IBPs involved identifying the pests that affect the vegetable, potato and onion industry worldwide, and prioritising them according to their risk to Australian producers.

Risks posed by pests and diseases such as Vegetable Leaf Miner were analysed and measures were identified to reduce the chance of pests reaching Australia. Strategies were identified to minimise the threat posed by these pests in the event that they do enter the country.



For more information: Visit
www.planthealthaustralia.com.au
 Phone: 02 6260 4322
 Fax: 02 6260 4321



VIRGINIA
HORTICULTURE CENTRE
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Virginia Horticulture Centre—Championing local growers

Virginia, known as the Garden on the Plains, is the vegetable basket of South Australia. The Virginia Horticulture Centre provides resources, services and training to the region's growers. By Angela Brennan.



Continued development — Grower Rudy Kotorac (left), agronomy consultant Domenic Cavallaro (centre) and business development manager at Stoller Mark Egarr undertake a basic hydroponic training course

Good rainfall has brought relief to South Australian vegetable growers. From devastating floods in 2005 when the Gawler River broke its banks, to the lowest recorded rainfall in more than a decade in 2006, Adelaide's market garden is now soaking up steady rain. Through all this, the practical and innovative work of the Virginia Horticulture Centre (VHC) has provided local growers with advice, support and training.

"Consumers have responded extremely well to the 'SA Grown' brand—'SA Grown' food has walked off the shelf."

The VHC was set up in 1996 as an export centre. Situated about 35 kilometres north of Adelaide on the Northern Adelaide Plains, the centre now provides an increasing number of growers with resources and services to support and facilitate industry growth. "The growers need someone to represent their needs and circulate information," said Victoria Richardson, group operations manager, post harvest.

"We're a community based organisation. We offer growers a broad range of training courses from management and administration to work practices on the farm. This year alone, more than 80 growers have completed courses in hydroponics and irrigation."

Current programs, such as the promotion of healthy eating in schools, on-farm

filtration in response to the Gawler River floods, retrieval and recycling of the region's plastic waste, and the successful launch of the 'SA Grown' brand into retail outlets last year, reflect the centre's energy, diversity and global awareness.

"Growers can feel overwhelmed by the changes to their industry. Yet, it is the growers who are its foundation. They inject more than \$710 million into South Australia's food economy," Victoria said.

The VHC speaks on growers' behalf on important industry issues from a local to an international level. The centre connects local growers and other regions. It facilitates community development and helps establish alternative markets and supply chains.

Launching local appeal

Last year, the VHC, with its members, launched the 'SA Grown' brand into six Adelaide retail outlets. The brand promotes certified fresh South-Australian-grown produce, giving consumers the opportunity to consciously buy South-Australian-Grown food over imported varieties.

"Consumers have responded extremely well," said Victoria. "We've had stores putting the 'SA Grown' product alongside generic labelled items with amazing results. The 'SA Grown' food has walked off the shelf." The brand will be expanded to the wider retail market following its successful launch.

The success of other programs is just as pronounced. Through the VHC's plastic recycling initiative more than 400 tonnes of plastic have been retrieved and recycled. Businesses have been assisted in clearing and cleaning their properties.

In conjunction with Rural Solutions, the VHC has worked towards better drainage and filtration following the floods in 2005. Natural vegetation plantings and reed-bed systems have been successful along Thompsons Creek.

Additionally, Gavin Limbert, operations manager natural resources at the VHC, is conducting an on-farm filtration experiment at one of the local greenhouse properties. "We hope it will enable landholders to filter all of their excess water to a reusable standard," said Gavin.

"It is a simple and cost-effective process that will benefit the entire greenhouse industry in South Australia."



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AUSVEG - CEO Message



I present this column to you as a very proud CEO of a dynamic organisation and a very talented team 'that delivers' for industry!

The task was set by the AUSVEG Board late last year to undertake the second phase of the 'Ausveggie campaign' —'Vegetables Claim Centre Plate'— and deliver a high-impact, memorable industry conference and national awards. This was achieved with great enthusiasm. Congratulations to all and a big thank you to our sponsors.

The annual levy payer meetings for the National Potato and Vegetable Levies were also held last month. There were several common issues raised in relation to collection fees and HAL management fees on the program. AUSVEG, as peak industry body for the industry, has been asked to follow up these queries in the coming months.

In other matters, the signing of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed continues to be difficult to solve. AUSVEG has taken a cautious approach as the range of pests and disease for vegetables is much wider than for other plant industries and the risk to growers' financial viability could be seriously undermined by a series of pest outbreaks.

In some ways it is a 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' situation. The main point of contention is the funding arrangements to be put in place should an incursion occur. Is a PHA levy needed and if one is, how much? One thing of which you can be

sure is that no decision will be made without growers' input through a formal consultation process.

In breaking news, the preliminary results from the Agriculture Census have been collated. The response rate was 93 per cent, way beyond expectations and the highest response rate ever recorded. As expected, the work the vegetable industry has completed has reaped rewards—there is a much larger number of vegetable farms and total production than previously thought. We have always said our industry is critical to Australia and soon we will have the data to prove it.

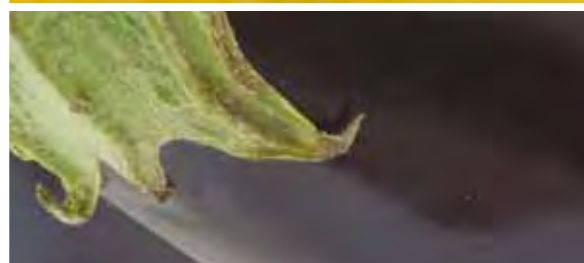
A Prime Minister and Cabinet workshop for Chemicals of Security Concern (CSC) was held in late-May in Melbourne. The main thrust has been in considering the applicability of adopting our present systems to cater for CSCs. More than 80 people from Federal and State Governments, plus a wide distribution of industry invitees were present, which is a good sign for a practical outcome.

A Minor Use Forum held in Canberra in mid-June was a great success. Opened by Minister Peter McGauran, the forum highlighted the need for Australia to follow the American lead where the US Government funds the critical work of chemical assessment as opposed to in Australia where industry undertake and pay for these assessments.

Finally, AUSVEG has been working on strategic partnerships with other industry organisations. More on that shortly as we prepare to sign our first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).



John Roach
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG Ltd



Around the States

New South Wales

Horticulture Code workshops rolled out in NSW

NSW Farmers Association has initiated a program of workshops to address some implementation issues that have arisen since the introduction of the Horticulture Code of Conduct. The program comprises a session about the basics of contacts, presented by a local solicitor; an overview of the code implementation issues, presented by the association's policy staff; and a session about negotiation skills from our Rural Skills Development Manager. Growers in Coffs Harbour, Griffith and Orange have attended the meetings and their comments have been very positive.

Horticulture AGM at Olympic Park

ACCC Commissioner John Martin addressed the AGM this year, as did other ACCC staff members who discussed topics such as collective bargaining. Nick Moraitis, CEO and chair of Moraitis Group, also featured. The Horticulture AGM took place on 16 July.

NFT hydroponic lettuce growers seek solution to pest problems

A recent meeting of Sydney Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) hydroponic lettuce growers was called to address the ongoing lack of access to appropriate plant protection products to control serious pests in lettuce crops. This summer and autumn, growers have been losing up to 80 per cent of their crops because of Western Flower Thrips (WFT). The suspension of methomyl (Lannate, Marlin, etc.) in late 2006 left growers without access to a viable alternative product for their crop protection program. Resistance to spinosad (Success) has been clearly identified in WFT. As a result, growers have seen major spray failures and serious crop losses. Peter Dalsanto, minor use coordinator for HAL, addressed the meeting and explained the challenges in sourcing and gaining registration or permits for products specific to hydroponic open-leaf lettuce crops. Growers resolved to generate Maximum Residue Limit (MRL)

data specific to their industry and to support existing and proposed research efforts about integrated approaches for managing pests in hydroponics.

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Queensland

Since the May issue of *Vegetables Australia*, two very productive sessions have been held to develop strategic plans for vegetables and heavy produce sectors.

In both cases, a conventional planning process was used with a representative sample of growers who volunteered their time to workshop issues facing the two sectors.

The base document for the sessions was VegVision 2020. It proved to be an excellent foundation and was used by Growcom to develop strategies for addressing issues raised. These issues included globalisation, urbanisation, labour pressures and declining profitability in a marketplace where major retailers attain record margins from fruit and vegetable sales.

As a result, Queensland vegetable growers have resolved to focus on marketing, including assisting schools to explain to students the plant growing and marketing cycles and show the career options available within horticulture. Biosecurity plans will also be developed and greater unity among growers will be encouraged. We'll be working with these sectors in coming months to determine how these plans will translate into projects.

Beware of dodgy contracts

The launch of Horticulture Code of Conduct was a major event. After the initial flurry of loud angry voices immediately before and after the official start date, it seems that everyone is getting on with what they do best: growing and selling. I'm not naïve enough to consider it is all plain sailing. We still have examples of dodgy contracts offered by wholesalers, as well as backdated contracts and instances of wholesalers trying to avoid declaring whether they are an agent or merchant for a transaction.

The ACCC has been very supportive of wholesalers and growers in their education phase. However, the commission's patience will ultimately wear thin, and those acting outside the code will feel the weight of the law.

From droughts to floods

The perverse nature of the vagaries of Australia's weather continues to amaze. Queensland's north has experienced flooding, and rainfall is measured in metres. Tully, south of Cairns, has a normal rainfall of 7 metres, which will possibly be exceeded this year. Meanwhile, south-east Queensland is still in drought, with domestic and commercial water reserves down to all-time lows. Elsewhere, the Victoria Gippsland region also experienced significant floods. Growers are really feeling the effects of these unusual weather patterns as they impact on the quality and quantity of production.

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Tasmania

Vegetable Marketing Plan for Tasmania

Nearly \$2 million is to be spent during the coming year to promote Tasmanian vegetables in key mainland markets.

The campaign by the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association is believed to be the first time that a state has applied mass-marketing techniques to support commercial products other than tourism.

The communications campaign for the Tasmanian vegetable industry will be delivered by Clemenger Tasmania, the agency responsible for the Betta Milk (Betta taste) and the University of Tasmania (Revolutionise Your Life) campaigns.

The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$1.9 million (excluding GST) to the communications campaign, which will target consumers in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. The campaign will run for approximately one year to July/August 2008.

TFGA Vegetable Council chairman, Brian Bonde, said that Tasmanians are proud that their state produces quality vegetables, and now it is time to take that message to the rest of Australia and increase the markets and sales of Tasmanian vegetables.

The TFGA has been heavily involved from the beginning in responding to the challenges faced by the vegetable industry. The response includes the development of a Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan, the marketing plan and now the communications campaign.

The Tasmania Government is involved in the promotion of Tasmanian vegetables, which will help develop a sustainable industry, and the TFGA Vegetable Council applauds this.

The communications campaign and the marketing plan are being developed as joint projects between the state government and the TFGA Vegetable Council, and are split into two tenders.

The successful tender for the marketing plan has been announced and work is about half-complete. The marketing plan will assess the medium- to long-term marketing needs of the vegetable industry, with both projects complimenting each other.

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Western Australia

Western Australian industry representatives are negotiating with the West Australian Government regarding new water legislation. As part of a national initiative, a total water reform is being introduced. As this is an important issue that affects all growers, we're taking full advantage of the consultation period to discuss with government the best way to introduce and implement new strategies.

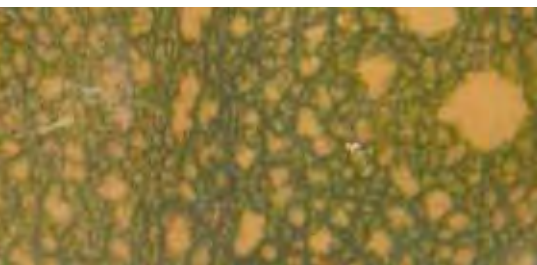
Much work is also being done before the introduction of the Fertiliser Action Plan. The plan intends to introduce policies to reduce the phosphorous levels in waterways, which has implications for horticulture, agriculture and home owners. Industry bodies are working together to find solutions that will minimise the effect this plan, once introduced, will have on growers. A core part of this process is demonstrating to government the good practices that growers already use.

Jim Turley
Executive Officer
Vegetables WA



vegetablesWA

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Calendar of events

JULY 2007

30 July—3 August 2007

14th Australian HACCP Conference (Food Safety)

Gold Coast, QLD

The Australian HACCP Conference Series is the premier Food Safety & HACCP discussion forum in the Asia Pacific region. The conference will include the following: workshops, conference dinner, HACCP Awards, trade exhibitions and the two-day conference.

Some topics to be addressed this year include pest control, criminal law and legal strategies, high-risk foods, cleaning for allergen control, packaging and much more, all in the context of food safety.

For more information:

Website: www.haccptown.com.au

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, Tas

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 needs to be done and how to do it.

We will 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 meats and grains—guaranteeing there will be something for everyone.

For more information:

Website: www.tqainc.com.au/conference

SEPTEMBER 2007

10-12 September 2007

Postharvest at Work—Australasian Postharvest Conference

Terrigal, Central Coast, NSW

The Australasian Postharvest conference is held every two years, alternating between Australia and New Zealand. The conference gathers researchers, consultants and industry technologists who work in all aspects of postharvest.

Presentations will include pre-harvest effects on postharvest quality, packaging and storage technologies, quality assessments, disorders and diseases, market access treatments, and meeting consumer needs.

The conference theme, 'Postharvest at work', focuses on how postharvest researchers and practitioners can work with supply chains to deliver the fruit, vegetables and flowers that consumers want.

For more information:

Website: www.aphc2007.com.au

OCTOBER 2007

12-15 October 2007

PMA Fresh Summit International Convention & Exposition

Houston, USA

At Fresh Summit more than 17,000 participants throughout the global fresh produce and floral supply chains come together as a community to learn, network, build relationships, and do business.

You will gain new ideas to increase consumption through the Fresh Ideas Marketplace, reduce costs and grow revenues with product and service solutions from more than 800 Fresh Summit exhibitors, see the latest market trends by participating in a tour to local produce and floral operations, and network with leaders from throughout the supply chain to exchange information about the key issues you face.

For more information:

Website: www.pma.com/freshsummit

NOVEMBER 2007

21 November 2007

HAL Awards Dinner

Sydney, NSW

For more information:

Website: www.horticulture.com.au

22 November 2007

HAL AGM

Sydney, NSW

For more information:

Website: www.horticulture.com.au

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