


# vegetables australia

- 
- A photograph of a man with grey hair, wearing a green polo shirt, leaning against a red tractor. The tractor has a large red grille and two round headlights. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bright, outdoor setting, possibly a farm or a market stall.
- 20 Vital veggies boost the market
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A lifetime's journey**
  - 46 Kill the mood: give breeding pests nowhere to go

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# A word from the AUSVEG Chairman

It is a great privilege to be again elected as Chairman of AUSVEG following our 2007 Annual General Meeting, held in Melbourne in late-January.

AUSVEG will continue to work hard for the vegetable industry and strongly drive change. AUSVEG endeavors to operate transparently and encourages all growers and stakeholders to review its annual report—available on the AUSVEG website—seek more information, or raise any questions or concerns. We are always happy to respond.

Members agreed to make few changes to the Board of Directors this year to allow the constitutional process to flow more easily to a resolution. As a result, Western Australia potato grower David Anderson has been elected as

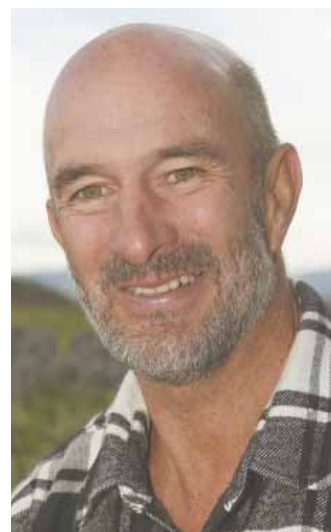
Vice-Chairman and John Bishop has been elected as Queensland Director for Potatoes.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the board (past and present) for its continued support of AUSVEG and how it looks out for the organisation's best interests. I appreciate the time board members give, away from their businesses, and acknowledge that this has been considerable due to the evolution the organisation is experiencing.

Finally, a reminder—mark 31 May 2008 in your diary. Everyone is invited to attend the biggest event on the vegetable industry

calendar this year—the vegetablesWA 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner in Perth, which will host the Australian Vegetable Industry Award presentations.

Industry tours and the annual vegetable and potato levy payer meetings will be held the day before. Order your tickets now and make a weekend of it. Everyone deserves a break from the farm once in a while.



**Michael Badcock**  
Chairman  
AUSVEG Ltd

## From the editor



The Australian Government's pre-election promise of an enquiry into grocery prices by the ACCC is rolling ahead, with all stakeholders touting the wisdom of the initiative. While the enquiry promises to make pricing mechanisms transparent, only time will tell whether growers get a fair go—after all, farm-gate prices are yet to see a sizable increase but production costs are continually on the rise.

For growers who want a long-term, low-cost method for reducing the impact of pests, try working with Australia's natural flora to create havens for beneficial insects. See page 46 for tips on how to tailor a revegetation design to your property.

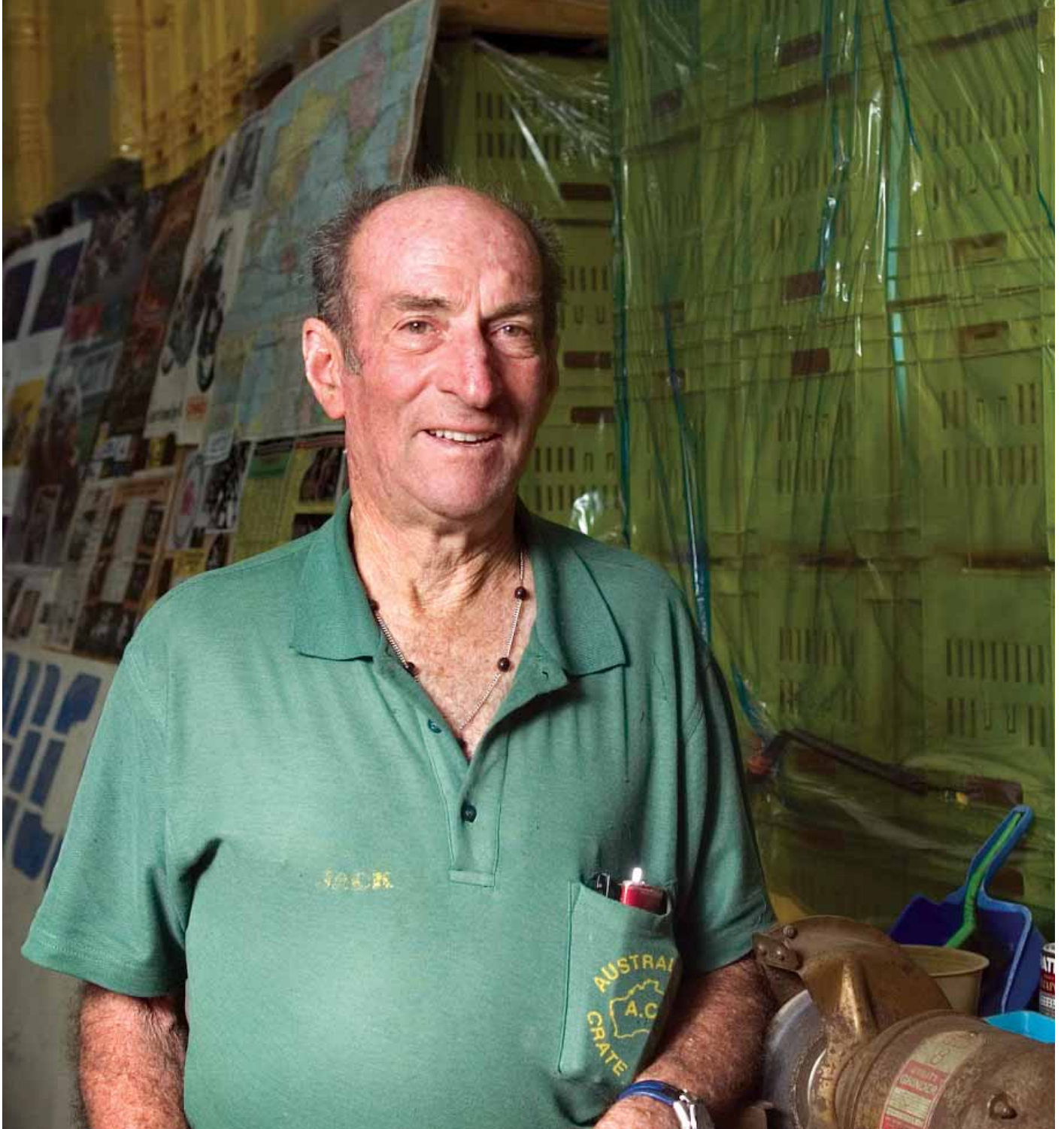
While many in the industry equate the words “environmentally responsible business” with “another meeting with the bank manager”, it's time to think again, says Environmental Manager AUSVEG, Helena Whitman. She argues that many growers have already done all the hard work without realising it (page 25).

Finally, after five years in the lab and on trial sites, Vital Vegetables is going commercial—its first release, Booster broccoli, is slated for a national launch in October. Read about the process of taking it from the site to the shelf, and whether consumers will pay more for vegetables with purported health benefits (page 20).

By the time you receive this issue of *Vegetables Australia*, the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee will have met to discuss R&D project applications for 2008-2009 and make its recommendations to Horticulture Australia Limited. This process ensures that the allocation of the National Vegetable Levy best meets growers' needs.

We'll see you in May in the lead up to the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards, but until then, happy growing.

**Jim Thomson**  
Editor, *Vegetables Australia*



Jack Walker:  
**a lifetime's  
journey**

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“Native plants provide a free ecosystem service to growers. They out-compete weeds and need minimum upkeep.”  
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# vegetables australia



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AUSVEG Ltd is proud to be an Australian Grown campaign partner.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Focus on children to increase vegetable consumption

A three-phase project by AVIDG brings the vegetable industry a step closer to a formalised marketing plan.

Desk and consumer research as part of a Domestic Marketing Strategy being developed for the Australian vegetable industry has found that mothers are the primary vegetable purchasers and influencers of vegetable consumption. Mothers are keen to see their children eat more vegetables and have identified a role for the industry to play through marketing and promotion to encourage this increased consumption.

The Domestic Marketing Strategy represents the largest single investment by the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group (AVIDG) and forms part of the Market Development Foundation Project.

Chair of AVIDG, Richard Bovill, said the strategy was pivotal to the sustainable future of the Australian vegetable industry.

“We’re looking for a detailed marketing plan that can be implemented and guide the industry’s investment in marketing activities.”

“What we’re looking for out of this project is a detailed marketing plan that can be implemented and guide the industry’s future investment in marketing activities,” he said.

“By increasing demand for Australian vegetables, their value should also increase. This is the core aim of the Australian

vegetable industry’s own strategic plan, VegVision 2020.”

Work on the Domestic Marketing Strategy has progressed in three phases; desk research, consumer research and in-depth

interviews with key stakeholders across the industry supply chain.

Findings from the desk research include:

- Vegetable consumption has been relatively static over the past decade at about 160 kilograms per capita, per annum
- Most vegetables consumed



### Penetrate the snack market

The second phase of the project, consumer research, saw 100 face to face interviews conducted with consumers in the low- to mid-income group. Participants were part of a family with at least one child 19 years or younger and were the main food buyer and cook for the family.

The research found that vegetables rated highest in terms of common food groups and that they were a feature for dinners. It also identified that an opportunity exists for the promotion of vegetables as a snack as a way of increasing consumption.

Those interviewed identified that the most effective means of product promotion for the industry was through television and point of sale materials.

Interviews with key supply-chain stakeholders contributed to the third phase of the strategy development. The interviews focused on perceptions of what makes up a consumer marketing strategy, the “Go for 2&5” program and other promotional campaigns, as well as attitudes towards other existing marketing activities in place within the industry.

The interviews revealed that a generic promotional campaign that the supply chain could tailor to its own programs would best serve the industry. Another common theme was the need for industry to conduct more consumer marketing and behavioural research with strategies to match the research results.

in Australia are domestically produced, but import competition is increasing—particularly in processed product

- Sixty-five per cent of vegetables sales to consumers are retail, 30 per cent food service, and 5 per cent ingredients for manufacturing
- Assessments of Western Australia and Queensland’s “Go for 2&5” promotions have indicated resulting increases in the number of vegetable serves consumed per person per day.

The research also indicated that consumers focus on convenience when purchasing, packaging and preparing vegetables. Weight consciousness among consumers is increasing and a lack of data regarding the measurement of vegetable consumption was also acknowledged as a challenge to the industry.

## Protected cropping joins national collaboration

An MOU signed by AUSVEG and AHGA promises greater cooperation within industry.

A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) promises a strong partnership between AUSVEG and the Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association (AHGA), the peak industry body representing commercial hydroponic and greenhouse growers Australia-wide.

AUSVEG Chairman Michael Badcock and AHGA President Graeme Smith (pictured) conducted the signing ceremony in front of the AUSVEG Board of Directors in Melbourne on 30 January. The agreement allows both organisations to further enhance their mutual understanding and relationship, as

well as increase communication to growers.

"The AHGA is a strong supporter of industry development and encourages the promotion and facilitation of key relationships," Graeme said.

Working together is one of the key objectives of the vegetable industry strategic plan, VegVision 2020, which encourages the Australian vegetable industry to work as a whole.

"This is a major step forward for the industry in improving collaboration and increasing the positive profile for the vegetable industry and the business environment for growers," Michael said.




## FarmBis applications close soon

Primary producers who wish to undertake FarmBis subsidised training must be aware of the following dates:

**31 March 2008**—FarmBis applications close

**30 June 2008**—Supported training must be completed.

Producers can apply for 65 per cent of training subsidies, as well as support for accommodation and meal costs when attending training courses of more than two days. Also, a travel subsidy is now available. For more information contact program administrator QRAA on 1800 623 946. 

## Love on the farm? Get real!

Following the success of reality-television show *The Farmer Wants a Wife* in 2007, a casting call for growers has been announced for a second series that is expected to be aired on the Nine Network later this year.

Male growers aged between 25 and 45 are eligible to apply to be a part of the show. If selected, their search for romance will be captured by camera and televised nationally. *The Farmer Wants a Wife* begins production in April, so growers are advised to contact FremantleMedia Australia quickly to submit an application.

## Flag 1080 needs now

The Department of Primary Industries is urging Victorian growers to flag their demand for 1080 baits with retailers before the peak baiting season begins.

DPI 1080 Commercialisation Project Manager, Michael Rosier, said with 1080 baits now available on the open market, the onus was on bait users to make their local chemical retailer aware of their need for baits for the coming season.

"It is important landholders talk to retailers now to flag demand rather than wait until one-to-two weeks before potential baiting programs, as this will not leave enough time for retailers to gain their Agsafe Guardian 1080 accreditation and supply bait," he said.

At the time of writing, there were 41 accredited retailers across the state. A further 24 retailers were scheduled to go through the accreditation process.

 For more information contact: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/1080](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/1080) or call 136 186

 For more information contact: Nicola Parry at McGregor Casting  
Phone: 02 9557 2844  
Email: <[nicola@mcgregorcasting.com](mailto:nicola@mcgregorcasting.com)>



# Drought Action Day raises \$5.8 million

Woolworths, the nation's largest retailer, lends a hand to drought-affected growers and their families for the second year running.

**W**oolworths Drought Action Day exceeded expectations with Australians showing support for growers in record numbers. Profits for the day totaled \$5.856 million, well over the \$5 million target and 25 per cent more than last year's total of \$4.7 million.

Drought Action Day aims to raise awareness of the continuing plight of families suffering through drought. Woolworths is donating all profits from every Woolworths and Safeway supermarket in Australia from Drought Action Day, which was held on Friday 15 February, to farming communities through the Country Women's Association (CWA). One-third of the money raised will fund ongoing sustainable farming programs through LandCare.

CWA National President, Lesley Young, was moved by the response from Australians.

"In 2007 we were able to help more than 2,500 farming families across Australia. The generosity of the Australian people this year means we can help even more families to cope with the burden of household bills," said Lesley.

"The rains are giving hope to many people but more than half of the country is still in drought. There is still an enormous need and we are extremely grateful to see that Australia still cares about its farmers."

Woolworths CEO, Michael Luscombe commented on the national show of support.

"This is a demonstration of how much farmers mean to Australia. The efforts of community and farming groups, corporations and individuals have all contributed to the success of Drought Action Day 2008. Our farmers are not only a vital part of the Woolworths business, they are a vital part of our national community, which is why we need to lend a hand," he said.

Grant applications were expected to open from Monday 3 March, via the CWA state offices.

## Woolworths cracks top 25

In other news, Woolworths is the first Australian company to enter the top-25 list of world retailers.

A Deloitte report of the 250 largest retailers for the past financial year stated that Woolworths had jumped from 29th place to 25th. Coles Group, which was bought recently by Wesfarmers, dropped one spot to 31st place.

The companies remained in third and fourth places, respectively, in the Asia-Pacific region top 10.

Both retailers are punching above their weight given the size of the Australian market, said Consumer Business Leader Deloitte Australia, Andrew Griffiths.

"The financial markets are valuing highly these Australian companies' non-tangible assets such as brand equity, differentiation, innovation, first-mover advantage, market dominance, customer loyalty, execution, and customer experience," he said.



For more information visit:  
The Country Women's  
Association website,  
[www.cwaa.org.au](http://www.cwaa.org.au)

**FRIDAY 15 FEBRUARY**  
**WOOLWORTHS**  
**DROUGHT**  
**ACTION**  
**DAY '08**

**Backing our Farmers**

Shop with us on Friday 15 February and we'll give the entire day's supermarket profit to help the Australian farming community.

100% 100% of profits from all Woolworths Supermarkets in NSW on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the Country Women's Association of NSW for drought relief initiatives. Details for CWA of NSW are PO Box 16, Potts Point NSW 1566, phone 002 9222 1200, fax 002 9222 1400. 100% 100% of profits from all Safeway Supermarkets in VIC on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the Country Women's Association of VIC for drought relief initiatives. Details for CWA of VIC are 484 Central Road, Sunbury VIC 3086, phone 03 9227 8971, fax 03 9227 7162. 100% of profits from all Woolworths Supermarkets in WA on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the Country Women's Association of WA for drought relief initiatives. Details for CWA of WA are 1174 Hay St, West Perth WA 6005, phone 08 9241 1940, fax 08 9241 1940. 100% of profits from all Woolworths Supermarkets in QLD on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the Country Women's Association of QLD for drought relief initiatives. Details for CWA of QLD are 104 Elizabeth Street, North Brisbane QLD 4000, phone 07 3221 4422, fax 07 3221 4422. 100% of profits from all Woolworths Supermarkets in NT on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the Country Women's Association of NT for drought relief initiatives. Details for CWA of NT are 3 Packard Pl, Darwin NT 0800, phone fax 0841 5305 54, 100% of profits from all Woolworths Supermarkets in SA on Friday 15/02/08 will go to the South Australian Country Women's Association for drought relief initiatives. Details for SACWA are SA 800 0 Stephens Terrace, North Haven SA 5047, phone 8322 4700, fax 8322 4700. Woolworths National Call Centre 1800 222 676.

# Tailored business education on its way

National survey finds growers are keen to increase business and leadership skills.

The Australian vegetable industry strategic plan, VegVision 2020 identified the importance of developing skills, knowledge and people resources in the industry.

People Development Coordinator Dianne Fullelove has completed a Vegetable Industry People Development Needs Analysis, which provides a picture of the training growers want in business management and leadership. It included surveys of vegetable growers, industry development officers and industry organisations; and interviews with key vegetable industry members. Dianne talked with vegetable, potato, tomato, onion and protected-cropping growers to establish training needs.

The analysis found that training is required in the general areas of business management, financial management, people management and marketing with a preference for higher-end management skills. The most important factor was that skills should be firmly tied to business profitability. Specific skills needed were business evaluation and planning, understanding costs of production and financial reports, better communication, developing negotiation and conflict resolution skills, improving decision making and managing change, and creating marketing opportunities.

## Generation gap

There were differences in the training requirements of growers, depending on their age. Younger growers were keen to

## Training Needs Analysis comments from industry leaders:

“The vegetable industry is in a major change curve with private equity entering our industry companies. We need skills through the whole supply chain.”

“Food shortages in the northern hemisphere will open opportunities.”

“Vegetable farms need to expand to embrace new technology and innovations.”

“Industry should introduce training as part of business life, not as a program out of hours.”

“Increase in disposable income will increase consumption of higher-quality niche products and pre-prepared foods.”


analyse their business, establish marketing groups and create new products or markets. Older growers wanted to explore business structures, improve negotiation skills and manage their time more effectively. Younger growers were eager to participate in grower tours and farm visits while older growers were comfortable learning in small groups.

Convenience was the most important aspect in growers' willingness to engage in training.

Time and length of the training were also important for growers who need to fit training into their busy schedules.

While much training is available, Dianne recognised that it occurs with little coordination between commodity groups and states.

Research of leadership skills revealed that good leaders across the industry have similar characteristics and skills; however, more skills were needed by a wider range of people. Characteristics of



successful leaders were found to be common across commodities and regions; they were successful in business, good listening skills, creating a vision, and integrity and honesty.

There is a lack of leadership development for younger growers and little encouragement for them to participate in industry organisations. People in the industry felt that leadership training should build on the existing skill base.

### Tailored business program

Improved business management skills were identified as an important way for growers to develop their businesses. While there are many available training courses that teach business skills or leadership, there were none that specifically dealt with the issues faced by horticultural industries at

a practical level.

In response to these needs, AUSVEG is partnering with an experienced training provider to customise an existing program to suit the needs of vegetable grow-

“The most important factor was that skills should be firmly tied to business profitability.”

ers. The provider already delivers training to other rural industries and is experienced in business and leadership training.


The program has a holistic approach to skill development by combining practical information with business planning. Topics include financial management, people management, and market-

ing. These will be delivered in an interactive way with participants learning communication and leadership skills relevant to their business as they gain business skills.

Attending growers will gain a greater understanding of the financial side of their business, a business plan for expansion and funding applications, and more skills in marketing and labour management.

It is proposed that the program will be a residential course with two sessions of three days,

separated by two months. This gives growers the opportunity to put into practice the skills they learn, supported by a mentoring program. The program will be available in each state and will commence later in 2008.

The cost would be subsidised; the expected cost to a grower would be about \$1,000, tax deductible. Growers would receive recognition for five units of a Certificate IV in Small Business Management which could be completed at a later date. 



For more information contact:  
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## Change of tune for drought workshops

Murray-Darling Basin growers may have some relief from the current crippling conditions, with a series of innovative workshops planned to ease the pressure on water supplies.

“Growers are drowning in drought information; they need a chance to filter it and work out what’s relevant.”

The Drought Information Delivery for Horticulture project aims to conduct workshops to assist growers in managing their farm businesses with reduced water allocations.

After consultation with Murray-Darling Basin irrigators, national project coordinator, RMCG Consulting, decided to adapt the program to better suit the needs of growers.

“We realise that growers are drowning in information, and what they need is a chance to filter it – to work out what is relevant to them,” said project manager, Charles Thompson.

A possible method for delivering the program is one-on-one

meetings where facilitators (ideally local people) experienced in business and horticulture would meet with individual growers to help them assess their options. This would provide growers with critical knowledge and information about the implications of technical management strategies to ensure the survival of their business. Facilitators can also recommend alternatives for financial assistance and, if necessary, assist growers with developing an exit strategy from their business.

“In many instances, facilitators would act as a sounding board, but a sounding board with a thorough understanding of the issues growers face and consequences

of decisions made,” said Charles.

Group meetings could provide a valuable forum for growers to exchange ideas and witness first-hand how other growers have stretched their water allocations.

“Growers have already taken various steps to manage their way through the drought—this is an opportunity to assess whether those measures are working,” said Charles.

Facilitators will be appointed in the Riverland, Shepparton, Griffith, Mildura and Swan Hill.



For more information contact:  
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Email: <charlest@rmcg.com.  
au>

## Said selected for Rural Development Program

Victorian grower to receive leadership training.


Well known Werribee vegetable grower John Said (pictured) has been selected as a participant in the prestigious Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP), commencing May 2008. The ARLP, which extends over 18 months, is open to men and women already active in industry-related leadership roles who want to help shape the future of rural and regional Australia. John's scholarship on the ARLP is partially sponsored by the National Vegetable Levy.

Selection for the program is highly competitive. Course members must have the capacity and prospects to take a leadership role at regional, state or national levels. The program provides participants with the opportunity to develop and share a vision for rural and regional Australia.

"It's a great feeling to be given the opportunity to participate in such a prestigious course.

I have never considered myself to be a leader, more of a go-getter who is fuelled by passion. To obtain some leadership skills will definitely help me," said John.

"Contributing to industry gives me the opportunity to share my thoughts with peers and others around me. Being able to develop leadership qualities will help me to contribute further."

The ARLP covers a wide range of subjects in a variety of forums, including visits to leading-edge businesses and activities across all industry sectors. 



## Agriculture leaders set the sustainable pace

A new Australian association continues the good work of the Global SAI Platform.

The Australian chapter of the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform commenced activities in October last year, providing an extension to the global platform set up in Europe five years ago.

The SAI Platform's aim is the development of sustainable agricultural practices worldwide. With

fibre commodities. A business approach is taken by the platform known as the "PPP's" where three dimensions are considered to improve sustainable outcomes—Planet, Product, Profit.

Members of the Australian Chapter are AUSVEG, Elders, Goodman Fielder, Kraft, Nestle, Meat and Livestock Australia,

"It is imperative that sustainable business, its practices and advocacy, is based on commercial reality. The European Union has taken a lead and it is paramount that Australia is not only engaged but also a leading advocate in this endeavor," said John.

### Established working groups

Much of the work undertaken by the Global SAI Platform is through working groups that aim to develop, promote and implement sustainable agriculture practices. These groups can be sectoral (product- or industry-based) or thematic (issue-based). The framework for working groups adopted by the global platform revolves around three key activities:

1. Development of documents, including mission statement, principles, practices and indicators for sustainability

2. Stakeholder consultation
3. Pilot testing and roll-out, which is the responsibility of individual companies.

Working groups can draw on this framework or develop their own plan and approach.

The Australian Platform's working groups aim to be functioning by the end of the year. While new groups will be considered over time, the initial groups are:

#### Sectoral

- Vegetables
- Grains
- Livestock and livestock products

#### Thematic

- Climate
- Water.

“It is imperative that sustainable business, its practices and advocacy, is based on commercial reality.”

Australia being a key participant in the global agricultural system, it is important that SAI Platform activities and principles are extended here.

The SAI Platform is an independent association that operates across the agriculture, food and

National Foods and Fosters.

Nick Kemp, General Manager Horticulture for Elders, has been elected President of the Australian chapter, with AUSVEG CEO John Roach elected as Vice President, and Selwyn Helibron as Secretary and Treasurer.

 To receive a bimonthly newsletter detailing the activities of SAI's Australian and Global Platforms, email <enquiries@saiplatformaust.org> or visit [www.saiplatform.org](http://www.saiplatform.org)

# Fertiliser research centre an Australian first

Growers stand to benefit from a new research centre—the first of its kind in Australia—that aims to develop more advanced fertilisers for agricultural use.

The Mosaic Fertilizer Technology Research Centre has been established by the University of Adelaide in a joint commercial venture with one of the world's largest fertiliser companies, the United States-based Mosaic Fertilizer LLC. The \$5 million centre, based at the University of Adelaide's Waite Campus, brings together world-leading scientists and facilities.

The Mosaic Fertilizer Technology Research Centre will develop and evaluate more efficient fertiliser products, which will be marketed globally. The intention is for new products to more effectively deliver nutrition to plants, enabling growers to produce higher crop-yields with greater efficiency.

## Existing relationship

The new centre builds on an existing relationship between the university and Mosaic. Mosaic has previously obtained an option to commercialise two fertiliser technologies developed jointly by the university and CSIRO



Dr Sam Stacey (left) and Professor Mike McLaughlin will lead the work at the University of Adelaide's Mosaic Fertilizer Technology Research Centre. Photo by Jennie Groom.

Land and Water, emerging from the research of Professor Mike McLaughlin, Dr Sam Stacey and the University of Adelaide/CSIRO research team.

Professor McLaughlin and Dr Stacey, both with the university's School of Earth & Environmental Sciences, will lead the work of the Mosaic Fertilizer Technology Research Centre.

Professor McLaughlin said the

new research centre will enable the University of Adelaide to expand its current research in this area, and to develop new techniques for fertiliser formulation and evaluation.

"As well as providing research to underpin the development of new fertiliser technologies, a major part of the centre's role will be to contribute to the evaluation of Mosaic's products under laboratory

and field conditions, both here in Australia and overseas," he said.

"This is a unique opportunity to collaborate with a research group that is recognised internationally for the quality of its work on fertiliser technology and techniques," said Managing Director of Mosaic International Australia, Peter Cameron.



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# AUSVEG Board of Directors announced

AUSVEG announced its Board of Directors at the 2007 AGM held in Melbourne on 30 January.

AUSVEG Chairman Michael Badcock thanked past directors for their considerable efforts over the past few years. "I very much look forward to working with the board to ensure the organisation meets the needs of all growers across Australia," he said.

The elected directors are as follows:

**Jim Trandos**—West Australian Vegetable Growers Association

**David Anderson**—Potato Growers

Association of Western Australia

**John Mundy**—South Australian Farmers Federation

**Steven Page**—South Australian Farmers Federation

**Des Jennings**—Victorian Potato Growers Council

**Luis Gazzola**—Victorian Vegetable Growers Association

**Phillip Beswick**—Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

**Ian Young**—Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

**Geoff Moar**—New South Wales Farmers Association

**Jeff McSpedden**—New South



Wales Farmers Association

**John Brent**—Growcom

**John Bishop**—Growcom

Elected office bearers are Chairman Michael Badcock, Vice Chairman David Anderson, and Treasurer John Mundy.

"Over the past year the vegetable industry has had to embrace change quickly. The

next 12 months will be an exciting time for the new AUSVEG Board and state representatives to help assist industry to move forward in a managed and structured way with a focus on profitability, innovation and collaboration with the Australian Government and other industry sectors," said Michael.

## Recent minor use permits

Permit number	Permit description (pesticide / crop / pest)	Date issued	Expiry date	States covered
ALLIUM VEGETABLES				
PER9214	Boscalid, Iprodione, Chlorothalonil / Onion / Neck rot	18-May-07	30-Jun-06	Tas and NSW
BRASSICAS				
PER10261	Amistar (azoxystrobin) / Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cauliflower / White blister (Albugo candida)	30-Jan-08	1-Jan-10	All states except Vic
PER10152	Agri-fos 600 (phosphorous acid) / Brassicas / Downy mildew	13-Feb-08	30-Jun-10	All states except Vic
CURCUBITS				
PER9103	Tilt & others (propiconazole) / Spinach (field) / suppression of leaf spot (Cercospora spp)	4-Jan-08	30-Jun-11	All states except Vic
PER9160*	Imidacloprid / Potatoes, Celery, Cucumber, Asian root vegetables (as listed), Peppers (as listed) / Silverleaf whitefly, Citrus mealy bug, aphids & thrips (as listed), Greenhouse whitefly, Green peach aphid and Plague thrips, Aphids	29-Nov-07	31-Oct-12	Valid for various states depending on crop
PER9918	Switch (cyprodinil & fludioxonil) / Cucumber, Capsicum (greenhouse), Lettuce (head - greenhouse) / Botrytis cinerea	4-Feb-08	30-Jun-10	All states
PER9919**	Euparen Multi (tolylfluanid) / Cucumber (greenhouse and field) / Botrytis rot (B. cinerea)	29-Nov-07	30-Sep-10	All states except Vic
PER10268	Karate or Matador (lambda-cyhalothrin) / Cucumber (greenhouse and field) / Heliothis, Onion thrips, Rutherglen bug and looper	7-Jan-08	31-Dec-08	All states except Vic
PER10311	Eco-oil (botanical oil) / Greenhouse and hydroponic Capsicum, Cucumber, Lettuce / Greenhouse whitefly, Silverleaf whitefly	7-Feb-08	30-Sep-13	All states except Vic
FRUITING VEGETABLES				
PER10091	Acramite (bifenazate) / Snow peas & Sugar snap peas (greenhouse and field) / Mites	30-Feb-07	31-Mar-11	All states except Vic and NT

\* Additional residue data is required in potatoes and Asian root vegetables.

\*\* Additional residue data required in field and GH cucumbers for renewal.

# MEDIA MATTERS

Grocery prices are back in the headlines, as the ACCC prepares to provide consumers with online access to the monitoring of supermarket prices. Here are four headlines from the past two months.

## “Food bills soar but farmers miss out”

*Adelaide Advertiser, Adelaide*  
Thursday 31 January, page 11

Adelaide food prices have jumped by almost 50 per cent in a decade, being pushed higher than inflation by drought and demand.

However, growers have said they had not enjoyed the benefits of price rises with the profits being taken by wholesalers and retailers.

South Australian Farmers Federation Senior Vice President, Peter White, said growers were not seeing any of the price increases.

“I think there are a lot of resellers using the excuse of the drought to put prices up,” he said. “The gap between what we are selling it for and the retail price is getting wider and wider.”

This comes amid warnings from Australia’s biggest retailer, Woolworths, that food prices are set to increase further.

## “Watch on fertiliser backed”

*Cairns Post, Cairns*  
Wednesday 13 February, page 32

Farming groups have welcomed the Australian Government’s decision to call on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to include fertiliser prices in its investigation into the cost of groceries.

The consumer watchdog will monitor the prices of fertilisers alongside its inquiry into grocery prices.

Growers anticipate the probe will help uncover the huge variation between farm-gate prices and the prices consumers pay at the checkout.

Growcom Chief Advocate, Mark Panitz, said fertiliser was a significant input cost for fruit and vegetable growers. Examining fertiliser prices was vital to understanding whether current prices were warranted.

## “Food bills likely to remain high despite heavy rainfall”

*Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney*  
Tuesday 12 February, page 4

A break in the drought will not lead to cheaper food prices, as producers have previously warned. The warning comes as New South Wales Premier, Morris Iemma, said he expected January’s record rainfall to ease pressure on growers and stabilise grocery prices, with just over 46 per cent of New South Wales remaining in drought compared with almost 53 per cent two months ago.

However, AUSVEG Chairman, Michael Badcock, said consumers were unlikely to see prices as low as they had been 12 months ago.

It comes as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released its issues paper for the inquiry into grocery prices, called last month by the Australian Government. The commission will focus on basic household grocery items such as fresh vegetables, fruit and meat, dairy and bakery goods, and packaged and frozen foods.

## “ACCC to monitor grocery prices”

*Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney*  
Tuesday 22 January

Consumers will soon be able to monitor supermarket prices online, thanks to a Federal Government probe into grocery prices.

Assistant Treasurer, Chris Bowen, announced the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) would be in charge of an inquiry into grocery prices as part of a Labor election promise.

Australia’s largest retailer, Woolworths, hopes the inquiry will give consumers a better understanding of the factors driving food price inflation in Australia.

“Woolworths welcomes this inquiry as an opportunity to get all the facts examined in an open and objective manner,” said Public Affairs Director, Andrew Hall, in a statement.



Don't sweat  
the small stuff,

it's time to  
think big

Youna Angevin-Castro speaks to three members of the Production Advisory Group to discuss how a change in approach will help the industry tackle some of its toughest production issues yet.





Every day, growers tackle a raft of issues that impact on production, and ultimately the viability of their businesses. Understanding that production remains one of the top priorities for growers, the VegVision 2020 strategic plan sought to find better ways of dealing with production issues. This new direction is reflected in the structure and approach of the industry's research and development program.

### Same problems, new approach

"Production is such a large portfolio," said Kent West, Chair of the industry's Production Advisory Group. "It encompasses everything from plant pathology and soil health, to farm practices, through to some of the more complex issues, such as water and climate change."

Kent has been a member of production advisory committees

for many years, and says that traditionally, problems have been solved using a commodity-based approach. He believes the industry is calling for a more effective way of managing the investment into production research. As a result, a more issues-based approach has been developed.

"To deal with production issues more effectively and to provide greater value from the R&D program, we've established four overarching areas that group together common production matters, such as farm practices, and soil and water health," he said.

Kent hopes that the new structure will encourage researchers to work together and group their research efforts to provide outcomes that help more growers.

"An outcome focus will be an absolute necessity for any investment decision made by industry. With the multitude of research components out there, it can sometimes be difficult to see the direct outcomes. However, if we target projects that we can build on, and adopt a modular style of investment, growers will get better value for their investment.

"To this end, we're encouraging researchers to work together where possible, avoiding unnecessary duplications, and providing multi-faceted solutions to broad-based issues."

### Integration is key

Years of research into supply chain management and industry development have taught Associate Professor Ray Collins of the University of Queensland that a single-minded approach to tackling issues is rarely successful.

"We cannot deal with issues as silos, compartmentalising them, and dealing with them as isolated problems," Ray said. "If we do that, we will get no further than we did using the commodity approach."

For Ray, who joins the advisory group in a specialist capacity, the key to success is integration.

"I'm interested in the ways people can work together to make things profitable and sustainable, and how they can work in consul-

**The Production Advisory Group** is one of five groups established under the VegVision 2020 strategic pillars to support the deliberations of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee about the National Vegetable Levy investment in R&D. Members of this group are: Rick Butler, Tim Burgess (non-voting), Ray Collins (non-voting), Lisa Crooks, Peter Dal Santo (non-voting), Denise Harslett (reserve member), Colin Houston (non-voting), Bradley Ipsen, Ian James (non-voting), John Newman, George Smith, Graeme Smith (non-voting), Kent West, Ian Young, and Jeff Yost (non-voting).

tation with other groups," he said.

Ray is impressed with the industry's refreshing view on how to approach strategic planning, and believes that an integrated, issues-based approach has merit.

"Industry is heading towards establishing big, multi-project programs, rather than small programs. As long as we make sure that the projects are stitched together, we have the capacity to help many commodities at once, and make better use of resources," he said.

"In the past, the industry has worked on dealing with issues affecting the supply of a commodity. We've now moved to a view of looking at the whole system—people, markets, IT and infrastructure. What makes this strategy great is that it takes all this into account, and acknowledges that production is just one part of a larger system."

### Creating channels

Ray identifies communication as an important part of integration; an opinion mirrored by Queensland herb grower Lisa Crooks. Her involvement on the advisory group has shown her that the way to approach a problem, whether local or global, is to talk to the people involved.

"We've encountered some issues in the Beaudesert Shire in recent times with growing urban development around rural properties," said Lisa. "Some rural areas have been re-zoned as residential, and this has created some problems within the surrounding community."


With the local residents expressing environmental concerns, Lisa found that many

of the problems were related to a general lack of understanding of what the farming community does, and a lack of awareness of the standards applied by industry.

"We've since established a taskforce aimed at talking to the local community, and educating them through workshops and local meetings. The response has been great."

Lisa puts this down to establishing lines of communication, and believes that similar approaches will work within industry forums.

"We need to create opportunities for groups to provide input into dealing with issues. This means dropping state lines and working across boundaries," she said.

"It is going to become increasingly important for states to work together, to share information and resources, and build things together. We have fantastic resources at our fingertips—we just need to start moving in the same direction." 

### THE BOTTOM LINE

- As many of the issues faced by growers are still production-related, the Production Advisory Group has restructured its approach to focus on broader issues, rather than commodities.
- This will allow the industry to make better use of its investment in R&D, with approved projects aimed at helping as many commodities as possible.
- To assist in this, stronger communication needs to be fostered within industry, to overcome boundaries between states, groups and associations.

# Aussies on familiar ground in Texas



Steve Cargill from Cargill Produce at Knippa, Texas, talks to Kevin Philip and Lucia Kerlin from SP Exports, QLD, and Prof Daniel Leskovar and Dr Bob Holloway from Texas A&M University.

A grower tour of Texas showed participants that the issues they face back home aren't unique to Australia.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- A grower tour of south-west Texas was planned to coincide with attendance at the 2007 PMA conference in Houston.
- Texan vegetable growers face similar issues to their Australian counterparts, including labour shortages and access to water.
- With no central markets, Texan growers rely solely on supermarkets to sell their produce. Growers spend much time marketing their produce and negotiating with supermarkets.

For more information visit:  
[www.horticulture.com.au](http://www.horticulture.com.au)  
Project number: HG06173

Labour shortage, limited access to water and too few market outlets. Sounds like typical issues facing local vegetable growers, doesn't it? However, in this case they are issues facing vegetable growers in south-west Texas. This was just some of what a group of Australian vegetable business people found when they visited the United States late last year.

Consultant Jonathan Eccles led the visit. "We planned the tour to coincide with the Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) Fresh Summit International Convention & Exposition held in Houston last October so that delegates could take greater advantage of their trip to Texas," he said.

The group based themselves in San Antonio as the surrounding area is a major winter vegetable production area. Visits were made to the Texas A&M University's Experimental and Research Station in Uvalde, nearby vegetable enterprises, a number of retail outlets, and the Port of Houston.

Vegetable production in Texas is US\$450m (AUS \$517m) per year, which makes it the fourth biggest vegetable producing state in America. Labour is a significant issue for growers. There has been increasing government regulation on immigration as a result of homeland security since 2001.

Labour costs have increased to \$5.50 per hour (AUS \$6.30 per hour). As the Mexican labour

force prefers to work in urban areas where wages are higher, growers are shifting their plantings away from labour-intensive crops, such as vegetables, to field crops.

Some of the largest farms have moved their operations south of the border where there is less regulation and ample labour. The Mexican Government encourages this investment and the huge Rio Grande Valley is only six hours further south. The North American Free Trade Agreement allows free movement of produce north to US markets.

## Water wise

Irrigation water for vegetable crops is sourced from the Edwards Aquifer, one of the most prolific

“ Limited water access and increased cost has seen many growers swap from furrow irrigation to central pivot.”



Jonathan Eccles (left) and Lukas Velisha at Verstuyft Farms, Castroville. Crop is fresh beans irrigated using furrow.

artesian aquifers in the world—it discharges about 900,000 acre feet (1.1 km<sup>3</sup>) of water each year.

The quality and flow of water is excellent and until recent years its use has been unregulated. Concerns of the drying up of springs led the Texan Government to set up the Edwards Aquifer Authority, which regulates water use. Landowners were allocated just 2 acre feet (3 ML/ha) of water rights per year. Water trading is allowed but 1 acre foot (1.5ML/ha) per year must remain attached to the land. Most vegetable farmers

would require more than double the 2 acre feet allocation to grow vegetables in this area, so water is keenly traded with non-cropping landowners.

Furrow irrigation was the more popular irrigation method but limited water access and increased cost has seen many growers change to central pivot. The government pays up to two-thirds the cost of the new irrigation equipment.

#### To market, to market

There are no central markets

in Texas and growers rely solely on supermarkets as a customer base. Some of the tour group were envious of the number of supermarket that growers could deal with. While some growers sold direct to up to five different companies, H-E-B was the most popular. H E B is an innovative grocery retailer that has successfully diversified its stores, creating nine concepts to meet local socio-economic demographics including a dedicated Hispanic store.

Lukas Velisha, one of the tour

participants from Werribee, Victoria, said “talking to Texan farmers showed me that even on the other side of the world, growers have issues similar to what we find in Australia. With no central market system to provide a benchmark for prices, these growers spend most of their time finding out what the price points are, marketing their product and negotiating with their customers.”

**miedema AKV box fillers**

The AKV 42 fills layer by layer. This prevents the potatoes from rolling in the box. Ventilation of the homogeneously filled box becomes more effective, more efficient and cheaper.



# Vital research boosts the market

Five years in the making, a new strain of broccoli is set to be launched later this year. By Youna Angevin-Castro.

**B**ooster broccoli, the first product to come out of the Vital Vegetables program, will be commercially available later this year. The commercialisation of Booster will be made possible through the commitment and vision of a group of marketing partners, collectively known as the Vital Vegetable Marketing Partnership (VVMP).

Vital Vegetables was a five-year research project aimed at developing a range of vegetable products with increased health benefits. Booster is a strain of broccoli that contains higher levels of glycosinolates (naturally-occurring compounds that scientists believe have cancer-fighting attributes); it is undergoing commercial trials nationally.

“Booster is being trialled in all states, except for Western Australia and South Australia, and so far it has been very successful,” said John Said, Chair of the VVMP and Managing Director of Werribee-based Fresh Select. The scientific

# Word from the street

*Vegetables Australia* asked consumers whether they'd take the plunge and buy a vegetable variety that claims to have increased health benefits, when compared with other brands.

## **Martin Taylor, aged 42, IT Manager**

Probably, yes. It would depend on whether it is easily accessible and whether the price difference is significant. If the benefits have been scientifically proven and aren't just a marketing ploy, I would certainly consider it. I don't think it could do any harm.

## **Becky Hauler, aged 29, mother of three**

I would definitely consider purchasing anything with greater health benefits for our family. If the product was substantially more expensive than the others, I would require some evidence of the benefits claimed before trying it.

## **Emma Matthews, aged 34, art valuer**

I would probably be a little sceptical about the claims. They would have to be verified by a credible source to have any value, in my opinion. If the vegetables weren't more expensive than the regular varieties, I would possibly try them out. The taste and quality would have to be as good as what I buy now, though.

## **Nicki Booth, aged 31, mother of one**

Of course I would favour it over other brands, if I was convinced it was better for us, and provided it was within my budget. Generally I'm pretty sceptical about claims of improved health benefits. I expect any health benefits between brands would be marginal—a carrot's a carrot, after all. Because I'm budget conscious when I shop, the price difference would also have to be marginal in order for it to end up in my basket.

data that has been collected since the project commenced indicates that glycosinolate levels in Booster are double that of some mainstream varieties.

The VVMP was formed in August 2007 as a marketing vehicle for the commercialisation of Vital Vegetables products into the Australian retail marketplace. The partnership was established between six foundation partners, including Riverside Australia, Fresh Select, Perfection Fresh, Houston's Farm, Salad Fresh and Simplot.

Kim Martin of Riverside Australia is impressed with the group. "Each of the six companies involved is a market leader, and brings tremendous resources to the partnership," he said.

The committee comprises highly motivated and innovative people who have recognised the value of the opportunity. "They also bring with them the resources of their companies, such as financial, legal and marketing expertise.

“ Vital Vegetables offers an exciting opportunity to create some high specialised vegetable lines.”

We are in a great position to make the successful commercialisation of Vital Vegetables a reality," said Kim.

Even so, the venture is not without its challenges.

"One of the greatest challenges for the group has been to make the time to work on the project," said Kim. While committee members were busy running their own businesses, their passion for the Vital Vegetables concept, and the Booster strain, helped them make time to make it happen.

"The progress to date has been phenomenal," he said.

### **Benefits to industry**

John highlights the benefits available to all growers if the Vital Vegetables brand becomes a commercial success.

"One point for growers to note is the fact that the opportunities associated with the Vital Vegetables project extend way beyond the main marketing partnership," he said.

"The companies involved represent a large number of growers nationally, so a great number of people are set to benefit from this venture. Plus, as more products are developed, so to will the opportunities for other people to get involved."

At present, plans to launch Booster are scheduled for October 2008. Consumers will be able to purchase the product across Australia, with availability extending beyond a single retail outlet.

"The process to market is very simple, however, extremely effective," said John. "We are using our existing pathways, and expanding on them within our capacity. This means Booster will be available everywhere—supermarkets, green grocers, markets, and other locations. This approach has allowed us to build on existing relationships, as well as making consumer access to

# Capsicum



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SPF 30 + Protection

- Excellent bush type for sunburn protection.
- Excellent fruit shape
- +350 gram fruit (1st Set)
- Very concentrated fruit set.

**Resistances**

HR : TMV / PMMoV: 1-2 / PVY: 0,1,1-2 /  
PepMoV / PepYMV  
IR : CMV / Pc



## CLX P515 F1

Mr Potential

- Excellent fruit set in variable weather conditions.
- Consistent quality and yields in 07 trials.
- Uniform shape & colour.
- Very firm fruit.
- Excellent bush type for protection.
- TRIAL SEED AVAILABLE

**Resistances**

HR : TMV / PMMoV: 1-2 / PVY: 0,1,1-2 /  
PepMoV / PepYMV / Xv: 1,2,3

# Tomatoes

## MANILA F1

Market Leader

- Very high pack out of 1st Class fruit.
  - Excellent shelf life quality
- Uniform 130+ gram fruit to top truss.
  - High fruit numbers per truss.
- Adaptable to a range of climates

**Resistances**

HR : ToMV / V / Fol: 1,2,3 / M\*  
IR : Ss (Grey Leaf Spot)



## PLUTO F1 (HTO36)

Cool season = Red Fruit

- Fantastic uniformity of fruit.
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- Deep red colour fruit in winter.
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  - Strong plant vigour

**Resistances**

HR : ToMV / V / Fol: 1,2 / M\*



**High resistances (HR):**

Fol: *Fusarium oxysporum f.sp. lycopersici* races 1,2,3  
- Fusarium wilt  
PepMoV: Pepper Mottle Virus - Pepper mottle  
PepYMV: Pepper Yellow Mosaic Virus - Pepper yellow mosaic  
PMMoV: Pepper Mild Mottle Virus races 1-2, 1-2-3  
- Pepper mild mottle  
PVY: Potato Virus Y races 0,1,1-2 - Potato virus Y  
ToMV: Tomato mosaic virus - Tomato mosaic  
TMV: Tobacco Mosaic Virus - Tobacco mosaic  
Xv: *Xanthomonas vesicatoria* - Bacterial spot  
V: *Verticillium albo-atrum*, *Verticillium dahliae*  
- Verticillium wilt

**Intermediate resistances (IR):**

CMV: *Cucumber mosaic virus* - Cucumber mosaic  
Pc: *Phytophthora blight*  
Ss: *Stemphylium solani* - Grey leaf spot  
\*The gene, which controls the resistance to Nematode attacks "M", is at the moment the only one used in our commercial varieties. This gene has an effect against the following Nematode species: *Meloidogyne incognita* - *Meloidogyne arenaria* - *Meloidogyne javanica*. The level of resistance of this gene is reduced, and can be completely cancelled by temperatures equal to or above 28°C, particularly in soils with a heavy infestation of Nematodes  
The descriptions, recommendations and suggestions are offered in good faith, for informational purposes only and can therefore in no way act as a guarantee of production.



the product as broad and easy as possible."

**Message to the masses**

Both John and Kim believe that public education will be critical to commercial success, and a campaign targeting consumer awareness and understanding of functional foods will be rolled out prior to the product launch.

"We have a unique product, and part of our strategy will be

“We are using our existing pathways, and expanding on them within our capacity. Booster will be available everywhere.”

to highlight the key differences between Vital Vegetables and normal vegetables. Part of that will tie into the credibility of our research partners and the technology they have developed," said Kim.

Following the signing of an agreement between the VVMP

and the Vital Vegetables Research Partnership (comprising Horticulture Australia Limited, AUSVEG, Crop & Food New Zealand, Horticulture New Zealand and Victorian Department of Primary Industries), the VVMP is looking ahead to the development and roll out of further lines in the Vital Vegetables range.

"The development of new products will definitely be important to the success of Vital Vegetables; it offers an exciting opportunity to create some high specialised vegetable lines, as well as the potential to open additional export prospects for the industry," John said.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

- The Vital Vegetables project has entered its commercialisation and marketing stage, specifically with Booster broccoli, a strain that contains higher levels of glycosinolates.
- Booster crops have been trialled in most states with great success, and the product is expected to be available to consumers by October 2008.
- As the Vital Vegetables brand expands its product line, growers will have increased opportunities to become involved.

For more information visit:  
[www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers](http://www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers)  
Project numbers: VG02125 and VG03095  
Keywords: Vital Vegetables

# Bring innovation back home

Following the success of grower tours overseas, further opportunities are planned for 2008, writes Ross Ord, Industry Development Manager AUSVEG.

Several recent announcements have confirmed the vegetable industry is serious about providing opportunities for growers to undertake outstanding personal development programs. In February this year, the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) advised that well known Victorian vegetable grower John Said (Managing Director, Fresh Select) had been awarded one of the foundation's prestigious leadership scholarships (see page 12). This announcement followed the 2007 award of a Nuffield Scholarship to Queensland vegetable grower Tim Harslett. Both scholarships are partly funded by the National Vegetable Levy. The two programs provide recipients with unique opportunities to develop their leadership and agri-business skills from forums and visits within Australia and overseas.

The industry continues to view development of its workforce as a sound investment. As a further initiative, the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has reviewed proposals to sponsor levy



Tour participants from the 2007 Young Grower tour to New Zealand.

payers on separate study tours to New Zealand and California USA later this year. Both proposals include attendance at high-profile industry conferences and trade shows.

## Take the tour

The tour to New Zealand will build on the success of five similar tours over recent years. The tour is open to National Vegetable Levy payers and their employees, under 38 years of age.

The tour will be held from 25 July to 2 August 2008. Ten growers and a tour leader will visit vegetable operations in the Auckland region of the North Island. The plan is to introduce young growers to production, marketing and supply chain systems operating in a country recognised as setting the benchmark in many of these facets. Auckland is the host city for the Horticulture New Zealand conference.

The tour aims to:

- expose growers to a range of on- and off-farm businesses practices
- develop growers' networks within the tour group and with their New Zealand counterparts
- introduce participants to

technological innovations, and the latest farm techniques and practices


- provide forums for growers to discuss topical issues with their New Zealand counterparts. These may include water usage, innovative marketing, packaging, consumer trends, and on-farm quality systems.

The tour cost will be substantially subsidised by the National Vegetable Levy. Growers will be required to contribute a maximum of \$700 toward the cost of the tour. All air and land travel, share-accommodation and some meals will be included, as well as registration for the Horticulture New Zealand conference.

A separate USA study tour is also being organised. Ten participants and a tour leader will visit vegetable operations in the Salinas Valley region of California as well as attending the PMA Fresh Summit conference in Orlando, Florida. Tentative dates are from 17 to 31 October 2008. Further details will be included in the next issue of *Vegetables Australia*. Confirmation of both tours is conditional on tours being endorsed by the Vegetable IAC at its March 2008 meeting. 

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- The vegetable industry provides opportunities for growers to undertake unique and valuable personal development programs.
- This year, separate tours are planned for growers to visit New Zealand or the United States, where growers will network with overseas colleagues and attend conferences.
- Tours are expected to be heavily subsidised by the National Vegetable Levy and are a great opportunity for growers to increase their skills and experience.

 For more information contact AUSVEG head office on 03 9544 8098 or visit [www.ausveg.com.au](http://www.ausveg.com.au)

Windbreaks are one form of on-farm vegetation that are suitable for inclusion in a carbon-trading agreement.



# Market emerges for carbon-conscious

A new DPI Victoria brochure will help inform growers about carbon-trading opportunities and agreements.

While business and industry assess the impact of Australia ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, some growers have already begun to trade carbon stored in trees through a voluntary market.

Trees are an effective absorber of carbon and their value in removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere is widely recognised, allowing it to be traded in carbon markets nationally and overseas. Carbon 'captured' in Australia by growers may be eligible to trade through a variety of carbon brokers. This new and unregulated market presents opportunities to growers, but the absence of market standards or trading guidelines does create some risks.

“As the carbon trading market is in its infancy, growers would be wise to take a ‘wait and see’ approach.”

“While it seems clear that an official carbon trading system will be set up in Australia in the future, a voluntary market has emerged to connect carbon-conscious growers with businesses and rural landholders to offset carbon,” said Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Private Forestry Industry Development Officer, Roger Cross.

Roger said the premise underlying voluntary carbon trading with private tree growing was straight forward, though he advised growers to be aware of their rights and responsibilities before entering carbon-trading markets and selling carbon offsets through an agreement with a carbon broker.

“The Department of Primary Industries has produced a new brochure to address the potential knowledge gap,” he said.

## Brochure sheds light

The brochure, *Considerations for tree growers before selling their carbon*, raises issues landholders need to consider when selling carbon, including fair price, impacts on land and important questions to ask a carbon broker when discussing agreements. It is a good starting point for landholders interested in the potential for trading their carbon.

Jeff McSpedden, Chair of the AUSVEG Environmental Committee, said that as the carbon trading market is still in its infancy, vegetable growers would be wise to take a ‘wait and see’ approach.

“There is potential there, but currently the management system isn’t defined,” he said.

Many carbon-trading arrangements require growers to make a long-term commitment (20 or 30 years) and guarantee that the carbon offset is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One way vegetable growers can become involved is to team with other growers nationally to create a carbon ‘sink’. Each member of the sink would devote a portion of their available carbon acreage to the agreement, for example, 50 per cent per member.

If one member’s carbon acreage is reduced due to harvests, bush-fires or other events, the other partners in the sink can increase their input to ensure that the commitment is met. Failing this, growers would need to purchase timber plantations to ensure they continue to honour their carbon-capturing commitment.

“Carbon trading is something that has been flagged for the future, though it’s still very early days. Currently, some orchards in NSW are involved, but there’s scope for vegetable growers to come on board as well,” said Jeff.

**i** Download a PDF of the *Considerations for tree growers before selling their carbon* brochure. Visit [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au) and follow the links to ‘Agriculture and Food Home’, ‘Private Forestry’, ‘Plantations and Climate Change’, ‘Carbon trading’



# The secret's out on sustainable practices

They may not know it, but many growers are ahead of the game when it comes to sustainable farming, writes Helena Whitman, AUSVEG Environmental Manager.

**W**hy is the vegetable industry so bad at letting consumers know how environmentally responsible it is? Is it because growers don't even know this themselves?

When attending meetings or talking to growers in my role as industry Environmental Manager, it has become clear to me that growers don't necessarily equate their good farming practices as being environmentally responsible. As soon as the environment is mentioned they think cost, change and legislation. However, growers who have become members of the industry's EnviroVeg program say that there was very little they had to change.

Most growers already have efficient irrigation, shelter belt or windbreaks, all-weather access tracks, fenced-off native vegetation, and secure chemical, fertiliser and fuel storages. While these are signs of good farming practice, they are also the calling cards of an environmentally responsible business.

Many growers have gone to great expense to lay underground drainage in an effort to catch every drop of water that falls or is used on their farms. Growers recycle their water repeatedly, and the efficiency of some systems is astonishing. Water is collected in settling ponds, pumped into storage dams and reused on



Victorian leek grower Peter Schreurs is just one of the vegetable industry's efficient and considerate water users.

the farm. Vegetable growers are generally efficient and considerate water users.

However, should proposed legislation for metering of dams be introduced, growers will pay for the same water more than once. This will do nothing to encourage continuation of this environmentally responsible practice.

## Growers are consumers too

Working with growers on their food safety plans has shown that the majority use chemicals very responsibly. They can't afford to use them for the sake of it. Chemicals and fertilisers are too expensive to use 'just in case'. As growers say, "Why would I want to harm myself and my family—we all eat this produce straight from the farm".

Many growers use alternative practices for their pest and disease management, such as Integrated Pest Management and beneficial insects. Chemical use

has been reduced to the bare minimum—again an environmentally responsible practice. Yet we tell consumers none of this.

Australia is one of the luckiest countries in the world—it doesn't have many of the pests and diseases that other nations must contend with. Because of this, many 'conventional' growers in Australia are so close to being organic in their production practices that consumers would be amazed. A considerable number of growers grow organically and many more have taken steps to gain organic certification.

Being environmentally responsible does not mean spending large sums of money and making huge changes on-farm. It often saves growers money. It means understanding which of your practices affect the environment and how they affect it. Growers need to think of the three P's—production, profit and practice (environmental impact). Let's show how good we are by

participating in the EnviroVeg program and getting recognition for what we do.

Once we've accepted the good news about growers being such responsible stewards of the environment, we can take the next step and shout it from the rooftops. 

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- Australian vegetable growers are not aware of the extent to which their regular farming practices are environmentally responsible.
- Many 'conventional' growers are incredibly considerate water users and are already close to producing organic product.
- Environmentally responsible farming can save growers money.



For more information contact Helena Whitman, Environmental Manager AUSVEG  
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## Grower involvement in

The annual ABARE survey charts industry growth and trends, and helps us better plan for the future, writes Ian James, Chief Economist AUSVEG.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

- For the second consecutive year, vegetable growers will be able to participate in the ABARE annual financial survey.
- Continued participation will allow the industry to chart growth and trends, and better guide its future.
- Last year's survey indicated that water and biosecurity were top priorities for growers, and that state capital wholesale markets account for more than 50 per cent of produce sales.

**i** For more information visit:  
[www.avidgroup.net.au](http://www.avidgroup.net.au) or  
[www.abareconomics.com](http://www.abareconomics.com)

The Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) will once again have its survey officers visit growers in April and May to assess the financial performance of Australian vegetable farms. Last year, survey officers were overwhelmed with the willingness of growers to participate. While these surveys have been conducted for a number of years in other agriculture industries, this was a first for the vegetable industry. There was strong feedback that growers valued being invited and were willing to provide the data to advance the industry and take it into mainstream agriculture.

Surveys are conducted in face to face interviews and about 400 vegetable growers are interviewed. The interview takes about two hours and there are often follow-up telephone calls to clarify information. The questions concentrate on the financial performance of last financial year (as most growers have usually signed their financial accounts off by April), while some are devoted to existing financial conditions. Supplementary questions are also asked about a range of issues. All the data collected remains confidential and is aggregated to give industry averages. Growers are strongly urged to support this year's survey.

This survey is part of an ongoing annual commitment and is one of three statistical legs aimed at providing more comprehensive data about the vegetable industry. The other statistical legs relate to production and trade flows (exports and imports). Statistics



Nearly all vegetable farmers interviewed as part of the ABARE survey undertook some form of irrigation

collected will be used for a wide range of purposes with the aim of lifting returns to growers through identifying issues and problems faced by industry.

Financial data from last year's survey was reported in *Vegetables Australia* issue 3.3, in December last year. Additionally, important industry data emerged from the supplementary questions.

### Water sources— a mixed bag

Water or lack thereof was the big issue throughout 2007, when nearly all vegetable farms undertook some form of irrigation. The major source of water was groundwater, followed by on-farm dam storage, then irrigation schemes. However, this varied between states.

# survey is crucial

Table 1. Vegetable industry produce sales distribution 2005/2006

Distribution outlet	Proportion of produce sold by volume (%)
Direct to food services	2
Interstate	19
Local state capital wholesale market	33
Local market	11
Direct to processor	26
Direct to retail	8
Export	2

Source: Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics

Groundwater was most important in the Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia—more than 50 per cent of water used was sourced from bores. In contrast, New South Wales and Tasmania were more dependent on on-farm storage dams. Western Australia and Victorian growers had more diversified sources of supply, while New South Wales and Victorian vegetable growers were more dependent on irrigation schemes. Some growers were able to tap into town water supplies, more so in Victoria and South Australia. This information proved useful in putting forward the vegetable industry's view in relation to the water debate that raged around the country.

Biosecurity was another big issue for vegetable growers. Encouragingly, 77 per cent of respondents indicated that they followed a set pest and disease monitoring program. However, the level of compliance was particularly low in the Northern Territory.

Pest and disease management was seen as the highest priority for research and development.

Concerns about biosecurity issues were further highlighted by the fact that 74 per cent of growers supported the imposition of a levy on growers, matched by government funding, to meet the costs of an eradication program in the event of an exotic pest and disease outbreak.

This important information helped form the basis of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed that the AUSVEG Board is being asked to sign on behalf of industry.

## Wholesale markets reign supreme

Information about distribution outlets is a crucial component in determining the profitability of vegetable growers and the industry's future direction. Questions about these issues confirmed anecdotal information previously available.

Tasmanian growers are more

likely to sell their vegetables to processors and Western Australian growers are more likely to export their vegetables than growers in other states. However, there were some surprising results in respect to the proportion of vegetables sold to different distribution outlets, particularly the low level sold direct to retail (see Table 1). Interestingly, in Victoria and Western Australia the rate of sales to retail was almost double.

The survey found that, for fresh vegetables, capital city wholesale markets remain the principal point of sale. When the figure for

Sydney), though the volume of trade direct to restaurants was three times higher in Melbourne than in Sydney.

Finally, despite difficulties experienced in the industry, the survey revealed a general sense of optimism. Over the next five years, the majority of growers intend to remain vegetable growers, expand their operations, use land more intensively, introduce new higher-yielding varieties, and introduce more labour-saving machinery.

This general optimism did not extend to Tasmania where the majority of vegetable growers

“74 per cent of growers supported a levy to meet the costs of eradicating an exotic pest and disease outbreak.”

vegetables sent interstate (most likely sent to other capital city wholesale markets) is added to vegetables sent to local capital wholesale markets, then capital markets are handling more than 50 per cent of vegetable trade. It will be interesting to see whether this year's ABARE survey records any major changes in distribution.

The sale of vegetables direct to restaurants is extremely small. This is a potential growth area where growers can extract better margins if the logistics of supply can be improved. Only New South Wales and Victorian growers said they supplied direct to restaurants (presumably in Melbourne and

indicated they would either leave agriculture altogether or switch from vegetable production to other agriculture industries. AUSVEG is aware of the problems experienced in the processing side of the vegetable industry and is working on behalf of the industry to overcome these difficulties.

J. ASK G. WALKER & SONS



# Walking wise— a lifetime's journey

After more than 60 years as a grower, Jack Walker has seen the industry undergo many changes. He told his story to Graham Gosper. Photography by Joe Castro.

Jack Walker's earliest memories of vegetable growing involve something rarely associated with the industry today—horses. "There was a special one we called Prince," he said. "We had a couple of Princes over the years, and a couple of Dukes, and one called Jock." These were all draught horses, used to plough the vegetable beds on his father's farm at Moorabin in Melbourne's south-east. Feeding and grooming the massive animals were among the first tasks given to Jack as a boy. By the time he left school in 1946 and took on his first full-time job on a farm at the age of 13, he'd developed most of the skills he needed to plough with them.

Jack is a third-generation vegetable grower and at 75 he has a wealth of first-hand knowledge about the way the industry has changed over the past 60 years.

His first job was on his eldest brother's farm at Maribyrnong, just north of the city. Jack recalls that back then, preparing vegetable beds for cropping involved long hours of back-breaking work. "We would break up the heavy volcanic soils with a plough pulled by a two-horse team, then hitch a smaller plough to a single horse for the furrow work," he said.

The horses pulled rollers over the beds to break up the soil lumps, then came hours of harrowing.

Despite his rapport with horses, it was a beast of a different type that won Jack's heart. It arrived in the form of a Grey Ferguson—the first tractor purchased for the farm in 1948. Jack was so impressed with the machine his brother put him in charge of its maintenance. Each day he meticulously recorded the hours the tractor worked, checked the water and fuel, then every 120 hours he changed the oil before attending to the grease nipples. Within weeks, its performance in the field meant there wasn't a draught horse left on the farm.

## Moving on, moving up

A capacity for hard work and attention to detail brought Jack considerable success in the years that followed. He left the job with his brother and began growing vegetables on rented land in partnership with his father. He married and, with his wife Kathleen, began raising the first of four sons while saving for their first farm. By the late 1960s, with a little help from Jack's father, they were able to put down a deposit on a 50-acre block at Cranbourne, on the outskirts of

Melbourne.

Jack and his family improved the farm and built the business by specialising in growing smaller bunching crops, such as English parsley, round radish and silverbeet. Initially, they sold their lines through the Melbourne wholesale market, before expanding to supply chain stores. He gained a reputation for supplying produce of consistently outstanding quality. As demand increased and profits grew, Jack and his sons diversified the business.

“I looked into my wife's eyes and realised the time had come for us to sell.”

They bought a larger property at Clyde North, which they planned to develop as a state-of-the-art vegetable farm.

However, in the late 1990s that dream began to fade as the Cranbourne farm, and then the business itself, came under increasing

pressure from Melbourne's urban sprawl. "Things started going wrong after VicRoads advised us that it may need to acquire part of the property—an area of seven acres where the family had built and moved into a new house five months earlier—for future road-widening," Jack said.

"The then Victorian Premier Steve Bracks announced an area, which included the farm, would become a green wedge. This meant the farm had to stay as it was while urban development was allowed around it, making it impossible to continue operating the business as we had in the past." The family suffered another setback when Jack was advised by the local council that the farm had been included in a 100-year flood zone.

Due to the uncertainty created by the planning decisions, Jack's sons began looking for more secure employment outside the family business. By 2004, only Jack and one son remained on the farm and production output was down to half what it had been five years earlier. The family abandoned its dream for developing the Clyde North farm and sold it off.

### End of an era

When his last son left, Jack decided to sell the Cranbourne farm. He discovered he was being offered about half what it had been valued at when the business was at its peak.

Despite this, Jack sold the farm late last year. The buyers, a finance company based in China, made an initial offer that Jack and his wife rejected. A few weeks later the selling agent brought company representatives to the farm and offered slightly more, but once again Jack declined the offer.

"They were heading back to their car when I looked into my wife's eyes and realised the time had come for us to go," Jack said. "I called the agent back and told him we would accept."

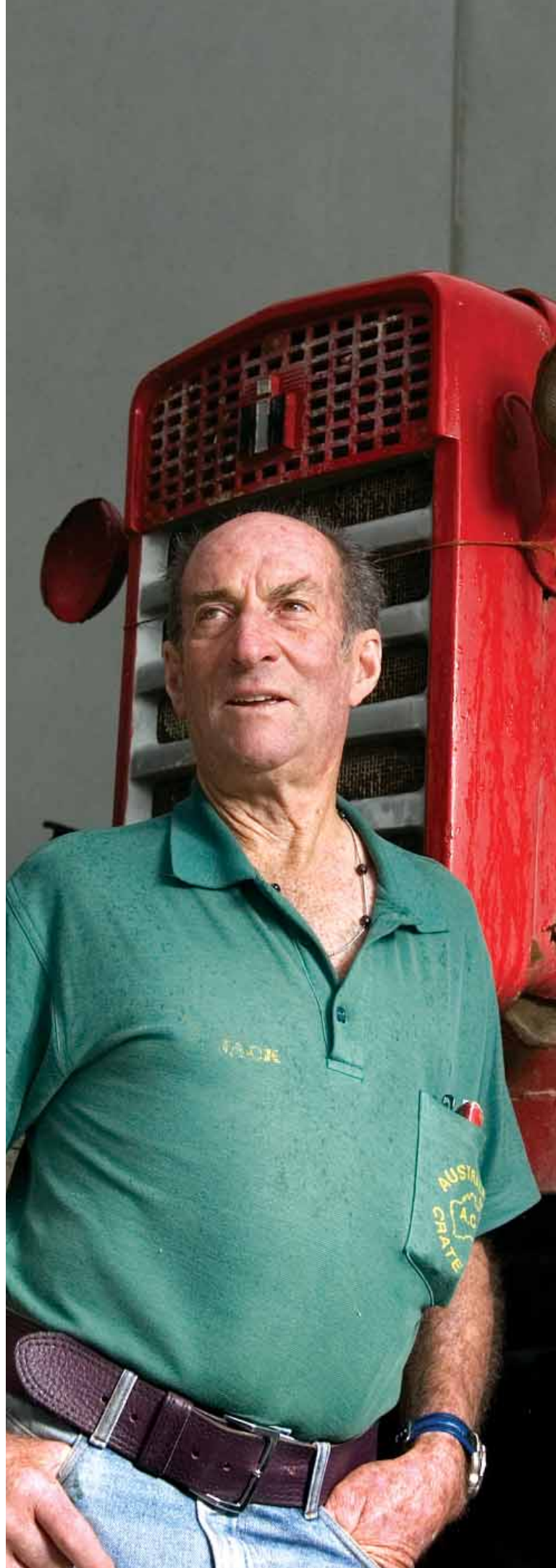
Jack doesn't blame planners for the difficulties the family experienced. He understands that

progress is a necessary part of life but he believes that governments can do more to ensure that people affected by forward-planning decisions are adequately compensated and their futures are not left in limbo for years.

“Things started going wrong after VicRoads advised us that it may need to acquire part of the property for future road-widening.”

Jack is still actively involved with the industry. He can be found at the markets some mornings helping his nephew, who continues the family vegetable-growing tradition. Jack remains a staunch advocate for growers through his work on committees of the Vegetable Growers Association (VGA) and Australian United Fresh (AUF); he is a life member of both organisations.

On the upside, Jack now has more time for his other passion—speedway sidecar racing. Jack and his sons competed in the sport over the years with outstanding success. Jack is a former state champion and in 1980, all four sons won national championship titles—a feat yet to be repeated in Australia. He says the sport provided an ideal escape from the routine of farm life over the years.





After travelling and working in Australia and abroad, Melissa Fraser has returned to her home state to assist local growers, writes Barbara Hall.

# Relishing hands-on role

South Australia's new Vegetable Industry Development Officer (IDO), Melissa Fraser, is a keen communicator—growers can look forward to receiving a new state newsletter in their letterboxes.

"I'm enjoying it all. The job combines every element of my experience—research, communication and hands-on work with growers," Melissa said.

"I'm updating the database so South Australian growers can expect a phone call but I'd also welcome them getting in touch with me."

“I'll be visiting regions in the coming months to build grower involvement in the R&D process.”

South Australian born and bred, Melissa has worked and studied in her home state, Queensland and Canada. "My family are from the South Australian Mallee. Straight from high school in Adelaide, I moved to the Eyre Peninsula as an on-farm trainee in 1997. Two years later I started agricultural studies at the University of Adelaide, at Roseworthy, which included a semester at Ontario's University of Guelph."

After graduating, Melissa travelled and worked throughout South Australia for a year. In 2003 she moved to Queensland to work as assistant manager of a dryland cotton, sorghum and wheat property on the Darling Downs.

## A taste for R&D

Melissa's time in Queensland didn't end there. Next was a position in 2004 as a technical officer with the Department of Primary Industries, based at St George, 500 kilometres west of Brisbane. She worked on the participatory Western Farming Systems Project—a satisfying mix of research, development and extension components.

The project's aim was to improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the district's marginal dryland cropping systems. Melissa's role involved coordinating on-farm research activities; she collaborated with growers to trial new varieties and alternative summer and winter crop options.

"I especially enjoyed working with growers there—and I got my first taste for research," she said.

In 2005, Melissa returned to the University of Adelaide to further her studies. She is currently writing her doctoral thesis on the saline and sodic soils of South Australia's south-east.

"The focus is on variations in soil morphology and mineralogy and the underlying characteristics of limestone and its effect on water movement. It's a fruitful topic, trying to unravel how the soils have formed and how to manage them in a changing climate," she said.

"As an IDO I'm pulling together my experience and knowledge of agriculture and communications, and adding research abilities from my PhD work, to work alongside growers. I emphasise growers' concerns and how to best communicate them, and connect growers with other facets of industry and research. That way we can stimulate productive knowledge and solutions.

"I'll be visiting many regions in the coming months to build grower involvement in the R&D process and increase awareness of the National Vegetable Levy and the great R&D that it funds."

Melissa succeeds Craig Feutrill who, as South Australian IDO for the past six years, contributed much to industry development. 



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# Consultation travel costs explained

Recent media interest in the AUSVEG annual report provides an opportune time to explain the industry consultation process in more detail, writes John Roach, AUSVEG CEO.

**A**USVEG is responsible for administering the National Vegetable Levy consultation process with levy paying vegetable growers. It is important to note that AUSVEG does not collect levies, manage the collected money (levy and matched dollar for dollar Australian Government funds) or make decisions about where the investment for these funds is made.

The responsibility for these functions lies with the horticulture research and development agency—Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL). HAL provides funding from levies to 36 peak industry bodies, of which AUSVEG is one, to administer a process that will garner input from levy payers on where levy funds need to be invested.

HAL could carry out this function itself but has found the best results for levy payers is achieved by outsourcing this to the industry's national representative organisation (peak industry body).

## Cost of consultation

Investing \$13 million (2006/2007) of vegetable levy payer money (half is paid by the Australian tax payer) is a considerable responsibility. It is

important to ensure the views of levy payers are equitably heard from across Australia.

The National Vegetable Levy is collected to conduct R&D on behalf of the vegetable industry. To determine what R&D should be carried out, HAL requires industry to have a solid strategic plan and identify priorities each year. Growers' input is required every step of the way.

All levy paying growers have the opportunity to input into the industry's annual priorities through a form available from AUSVEG or state organisation and their representatives. If you are unsure how to make your contribution, please contact AUSVEG.

Additionally, about 50 vegetable levy payers from across Australia come together three times a year. These growers form groups aligned with the strategic pillars of VegVision 2020.

Growers on these forums freely give their time and the industry (from the National Vegetable Levy) pays for their costs, including airfares, accommodation, meals, taxis and parking. Growers also receive a \$300 sitting fee per day; this helps offset the costs incurred to their businesses for attending the meetings. AUSVEG is responsible for organising all



these aspects from the funding provided by HAL.

### Diverse industry, complex decisions

Consultation for the vegetable levy is extremely complex due to the great diversity of crops and issues requiring consideration. This required the vegetable industry to have more committees of levy payers than, for example, the citrus or onion industries, who just have one—the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). The IAC is a formal sub-committee of the HAL Board that provides recommendations to the HAL Board, who make the final decision about levy expenditure. An outline of the Vegetable IAC and supporting advisory and working groups can be found in previous editions of *Vegetables Australia* or on the AUSVEG website.

AUSVEG also provides this service to the potato industry, where levy payers are likewise bought together three times a year in both the fresh and processed sectors.

At first glance, this may seem a lot but when you consider the investment that must be managed each year it would be more expensive to simply guess where the money should go. Growers must have control of their own destiny. After all, it is their industry.

### Other travel expenses

In the 2005/2006 financial year there was an increase in travel costs due to the industry aligning its R&D consultation structure to its new strategic plan—VegVision 2020.

To fill all the levy payer positions on these committees an independent selection and recruitment process occurred. The newly-formed committees were provided induction and training on the responsibilities of their positions.

Travel expenditure also related to the many projects that staff manage from various sources of funding, as well as travel costs for the Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane.

Other travel AUSVEG undertakes is to bring the Board of



Grower involvement in industry decisions and activity is crucial, as seen from the successful Fair Dinkum Food Campaign in 2005. This led in part to the development and launch of the Australian Grown logo, [pictured] in Devonport, TAS, in September last year. The Vegetable IAC is another way growers help shape the future of their industry.

“ Consultation for the vegetable levy is extremely complex due to the great diversity of crop and issues requiring consideration. ”


Directors together to govern the organisation and discuss strategic and industry issues. It also allows for member organisation representatives to come together to work through issues such as AUSVEG's new constitution. Additionally, travel costs are incurred to attend important HAL R&D forums and for the AUSVEG CEO to conduct meetings with stakeholders and government.

AUSVEG is a not-for-profit organisation. Its finances are externally audited and have been aligned to Australian Standards by respected accounting firm Deloitte to ensure every cent is accounted for and is transparent to growers.

Our financial reports are available to levy payers on the AUSVEG website and in the yearly activities included in its annual report. However, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to raise them.

The vegetable R&D program, supported by the levy and matched government funding,

has been of great benefit to the industry as shown in many of the stories published in *Vegetables Australia*.

Rather than estimate this value, HAL is conducting an independent, 10-year cost-benefit analysis of the R&D program to provide hard facts and figures. The results of this analysis will be widely communicated to levy payers later this year. 

### THE BOTTOM LINE

- AUSVEG is responsible for administering the National Vegetable Levy consultation process with levy paying vegetable growers.
- The Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), comprising about 50 growers, meets three times a year to make recommendations to HAL about how best to invest levy funds. The levy funds the cost of holding these meetings.
- Grower involvement in levy investment recommendations is crucial to ensure decisions are made that align with industry priorities.

# Penny pinching is a costly exercise

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- In recent years, finance for rural infrastructure projects has been increasingly jeopardised by economic rationalism. Governments have been hesitant to incur debt in order to maintain existing structures.
- As a result, Australia's agriculture industry has fallen behind its international competitors.
- Purse strings have opened slightly, but more needs to be done for Australia to retain its strong agricultural identity.

Expenditure on rural infrastructure remains a vexed question. Historically, infrastructure projects such as roads, rail, ports and irrigation schemes were largely financed by the public purse. These investments provided the foundation for Australia as a great agriculture nation. However, in recent times, economic rationalists have made themselves heard and infrastructure projects are now subject to detailed cost-benefit studies.

Debt has become a dirty word, especially in relation to the financing of visionary projects. User pay has become the prevalent philosophy. Governments at all levels have sought to prove their credentials by running budget surpluses and eschewing the undertaking of debt. Is this good economic policy? It would be difficult to find a business in the corporate sector that did not carry debt. Indeed, businesses that do not have some level of gearing are

Government belief in budget surpluses has crippled the development of Australia's rural infrastructure, says Ian James, Chief Economist AUSVEG.

often considered by share market analysts to be lazy in their use of capital.

### Frugal times— are they over?

Throughout the 1990s and in the early years of this century there was massive underspending on public infrastructure. Attempts were made to offload some of the traditional responsibilities from government to the private sector. Some of these proved successful, others less so. The net impact was the lack of vision and planning that had played such an important part in Australia's early development. In the cities this was most acutely felt in collapsing public transport systems, dilapidated schools, inadequate

hospital and public health facilities and periodic electricity blackouts.

Rural Australia suffered these deprivations too. Worse than that, the infrastructure that provided the foundation for profitable agriculture production was inadequate for a country competing in a global market. Australian primary producers have had to cope with antiquated irrigation systems, dysfunctional rail systems, congested ports, inadequately trained labour, and expensive and unreliable energy inputs.

Fortunately, in the past few years there has been a realisation that without significant investment in infrastructure upgrades, Australia is in danger of being

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left behind. The purse strings have gradually been eased and federal and state governments have announced a number of infrastructure upgrades, often in partnership with the private sector. Even so, Australia is playing catch up. It needs to be ahead of the game. Incurring debt to undertake infrastructure upgrades should not be demonised—providing the investments undertaken lead to long-term

“It is unlikely that we will ever again see governments pick up the majority of costs associated with infrastructure upgrades.”

benefits for the economy. Funding remains a key issue and it is unlikely that we will ever again see governments pick up the majority of costs associated with infrastructure upgrades. Some form of user pay will be incorporated. Trying to get the balance right so that these essential upgrades are undertaken without sending growers broke is the issue.

### Vocal opposition

Infrastructure projects are now more difficult and more costly to complete, and opponents of these projects are more vocal and willing to use the legal system to either block or delay proceedings. There are risks and costs associated with any infrastructure project, but the same can be said for inactivity. For growers, some arguments against infrastructure upgrades are particularly frustrating. Many boil down to self-interest rather than the national good. The enemy is often seen as the neighbour next door. Federal versus state, state versus state, state versus local, and city versus country scenarios continually emerge. There is little sense of Australians pulling together to enhance and build this great nation of ours. Divisiveness rather than collectivism dominates.

How do we solve this problem? We need to plan strategically to ensure that infrastructure is maintained. A strategy involving regular expenditure on infrastructure upgrades over a long-time span is required. With clear goals and plans, the nation will be able to compete in a globalised economy. If the proposed summit by the Australian Government focusing on the nation's path between now and the year 2020 (which includes discussions about rural Australia) achieves this, it will be well worth the talkfest.

## R&D project preview

# Integrated viral disease management in vegetable crops

**Project number:** VG07128

**Start date:** December 2007

**End date:** December 2010

**Project leader:** Denis Persley, Principal Plant Pathologist, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland

**Email:** [denis.persley@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:denis.persley@dpi.qld.gov.au)

**Phone:** 07 3896 9375



The insect-transmitted tomato spotted wilt virus frequently infects lettuce crops. Image supplied by Denis Persley.

Virus diseases cause significant losses in vegetable crops throughout Australia. The often intricate relationships between the crop host, the insect carrier and the alternative weed hosts make management decisions difficult. A greater understanding of these interactions will help us implement more effective control strategies.

With virus diseases, controls must prevent or reduce disease levels because plants, once infected, cannot be cured. Over-reliance on one control method, such as insecticides or a resistant crop variety, can result in control failure if insects develop resistance to the chemical or high disease pressure leads to the development of a resistance-breaking strain of the virus.

This project aims to identify and fill gaps in our knowledge of the spread and control of virus diseases in major vegetable crops. This will be done by targeted disease surveys and experimental work. The knowledge and experience of the national project team will be used to develop information packages that contain diverse information about viral disease management and provide an integrated approach to the viruses, their vectors and hosts.

Workshops will be presented in each state to provide current information about integrated viral disease management to growers, consultants and other industry professionals.

# More than

The annual Produce Executive Program takes growers from strength to strength.

A unique week-long educational and training program for owners and senior and middle managers of Australian horticulture companies and organisations has been developed by Professor John Morris, Director, and Jade Neergaard, Program Manager, in association with Monash University.

Entering its seventh year, the program embraces all horticultur-

The program aims to impart knowledge about worldwide developments and current trends, and update skills in leadership and strategy. Participants are sorted into work groups, which change twice during the week. They record each other's key issues and use their diverse perspectives, skills and experiences in projects conducted during the week. Groups are mixed and

produce owners, managers and aspiring managers have completed the program. Participants can apply for partial sponsorships funded by Horticulture Australia Limited or FarmBis.

## Like nothing else

Anthony Houston, CEO of Houston's Farms in Cambridge, TAS, completed the PEP four years ago.

"I looked at the program and speakers and thought, 'I don't want to miss this'. Previously I'd completed some one-day course with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but I'd never experienced anything like PEP; it was by far the best," he said.

"I was 52 at the time, and it was quite challenging, but then younger growers would find it equally challenging for different reasons—perhaps because they don't have as much experience."

The program provides an opportunity for participants to work on key issues with peers from all segments of the fruit, vegetable, flower, nut and nursery industries, and to interact with an international faculty and recognised industry leaders.

"The course is incredibly interactive. Groups have to complete a project by the end of the week, but only in their spare time, so before the sessions start, in coffee breaks, lunch, at night. We started early, finished late, and the caliber of speakers was fantastic," said Anthony.

"In my year, there were 32 other people, and you get to know them



In addition to attending the Produce Executive Program, Anthony Houston, CEO Houston's Farms, also enrolled two of his employees. Image supplied by Houston's Farms.

al products and elements of the value chain, including growers, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, exporters and service suppliers to industry. The seventh annual Produce Executive Program (PEP) will be held from 4 to 9 May 2008 in Mt Eliza, Victoria.

rotated to ensure a thorough sharing of perspectives.

Key industry figures who have attended the program comment on the way in which barriers between participants are eliminated and how well participants work together. To date, 220 fresh

# a PEP talk

all. The networking opportunities are great; people are from different backgrounds and industries, including vegetables, apples and citrus.”

“I’ve put two staff members through the program and I’m intending to enroll at least one more.”

## Long-term benefits

For Anthony, benefits of attendance continued well beyond the program’s one-week duration.

“I’m still in contact with John Morris. He became a mentor and has helped us in our business. Michael O’Keeffe is now on our board. Though he’s speaking at the 2008 program, he wasn’t a speaker the year I attended. Despite this, John suggested Michael would be a good person for me to meet,” he said.

“The program gave me insight into global and Australian retail and marketing, and global consumer trends. We were lucky in that our business was already on the right track. Some growers who attended had no marketing experience, whereas we had something to build on.”

Usually, the strongest endorsement of the program is a recommendation, but Anthony

has taken this one step further.

“I’ve put two staff members through the program. Nik Kondakas, my Logistics Manager, has completed a university degree in Agriculture Science. He’s in his mid-30s, and he said it’s the best course he’s done. I’m also intending to enroll at least one, maybe two, staff members in the next year.”

Anthony’s advice is for growers to get involved. “Some people have the mindset that, ‘I’m 55 years old, what I don’t know now I’ll never know,’ but really, you never stop learning. Just keep asking questions and asking for help. These guys can help, its all in one package,” he said.

“A lot of the Woolworths and Coles guys attend—senior management personnel have done it. In my year, Woolworths’ Senior Manager for Fresh attended, so the supply chain contacts were great. I’ve developed relationships with personnel from Woolworths, Coles and other producers. You eat with them, have conversations with them, and understand why companies operate the way they do.”



For more information contact:  
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Registration forms must be  
received by 4 April 2008



The Produce Executive Program is intensive, interactive and challenging, and is designed to develop knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- analysing and exploiting key consumer trends
- understanding distribution channels and market dynamics
- servicing the domestic market
- succeeding in export markets
- strategy development and implementation
- managing commercial relationships
- designing and implementing an optimum supply chain
- creating and using innovation
- leadership and management of people
- successful business growth
- developing the appropriate business structure and culture

## Profile: Burdekin Delta Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association

# Sunshine shire in need of labour

With hundreds of new farms established in the past decade, the Burdekin Shire is in desperate need of workers, discovers Tom Rigby.

**A**t Burdekin, located just south of Townsville, they say the shire is "built on liquid gold". One of the most productive agricultural regions in Northern Queensland, Burdekin boasts an average of 300 days of sunshine a year.

One of the highest yielding sugar producers in Australia, the Burdekin Shire is also responsible for sizable portions of the domestic capsicum, eggplant, zucchini, squash, hot chilli and continental cucumber markets. However, it was this year's bumper mango crop that had everybody talking down at the Kalamia Hotel, where the Burdekin Delta Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association's monthly meetings are held.

### Still going strong

Founded in 1977, as an associate member of the former Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing (COD), the association was originally based in Home Hill. In 1980, the group relocated to the Burdekin area's new loading depot in Ayr.

The association works with local council on strategies for attracting labour to the area, organises marketing tours in Melbourne and Sydney, and launches international fact-finding missions.

One major issue at the monthly meetings is how to counteract the effect of the strong dollar on exports. Association Secretary Eileen List said that Burdekin



growers require better access to the market, which is currently dominated by big buyers.

While the bulk of the region's vegetables are sold on the domestic market (thus remaining immune from rising currency pressure), harvest time still creates a headache, especially when it comes to labour.

### Timing of labour is critical

The association worked hard to increase the profile of the Burdekin Shire on the Harvest Trail website and through a television advertising campaign produced in collaboration with local council. While council sources have noted a slight increase in labour, Eileen

calls the national rural labour shortage a "disaster".

The timing of labour is critical, she said. "We hope that our new Federal member will be able to assist with increasing communication about crop timing."

It's an important area of discussion, as many Queensland growers are talking about expanding and diversifying their raw produce base for niche export and domestic markets. While diversification is on the cards in Burdekin, further international tours of growing districts (such as the European tour slated for 2009) will help Burdekin growers make more educated decisions about growing, handling and processing.

Eileen stresses the importance of the tours of domestic produce markets that the association has organised in the past. "Many of our growers aren't able to make the time to visit our markets, and this gives them a good opportunity to observe different practices." Referring to the tours as eye-opening, Eileen added that, "a lot of retailers could use some advice on how to store our produce".



For more information contact:  
Burdekin Delta Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association  
Phone: 07 4783 5599  
Email: <burdekin@ruralco.com.au>

## Apply for a Nuffield Scholarship



Young vegetable growers are the industry's future and they have the opportunity to expand their horizons with a Nuffield Farming Scholarship.

Applications for the 2008 industry-sponsored scholarships, valued at \$25,000 each, are now open to all Australian National Vegetable Levy payers. The winner will be selected on his/her farming and leadership

capabilities, and his/her potential to make a strong contribution to the vegetable industry.

The scholarship is partly sponsored by the National Vegetable Levy and is conditional on endorsement by the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee in March.

Nuffield Scholarship applications close on June 30, 2008. Applications are available on the AUSVEG website at [www.ausveg.com.au](http://www.ausveg.com.au) or through the Nuffield Australia office on 02 6964 6600, [enquiries@nuffield.com.au](mailto:enquiries@nuffield.com.au) or on the website: [www.nuffield.com.au](http://www.nuffield.com.au)

# Beat the invisible assassin

Queensland researchers have hit the destructive eggfruit caterpillar with a two-pronged attack—a parasitic wasp and effective chemical management, writes Angela Brennan.

The small but lucrative eggplant industry in Queensland is being consumed from the inside by a small but very hungry eggfruit caterpillar (EFC). Until now, there has been little conclusive research conducted to assist growers against this difficult to detect pest. However, researchers

“Second, we spent time monitoring infestation through use of pheromone traps. Unfortunately, the traps did not give accurate predictions of egg lays in the crops, so they are not good tools for making spray decisions. However, they did give an indication of pest pressure, so they are useful

“Finding an insecticide that worked was more complex because the only way to know the fruit has been infested is by the grub’s exit holes, by which time the damage is done. That’s why the wasp is great—it gets the egg,” said Iain.

“We now know which insecticides work, but we don’t want to kill the wasp so we encourage growers to use chemicals that are soft on parasitic wasps.”

## Cost-effective success

A few seasons ago, Bundaberg grower Luca Pippia was losing almost half his crop because of EFC. “It was costing us thousands of dollars,” he said.

However, rigorous attention to IPM plus a regular spray routine has effectively wiped out the problem. “We haven’t seen the moth for the past two seasons. We look after our natural predators and only bring in the chemicals when the pests outweigh the beneficials. It’s about halved our chemical costs,” he said.

Growers such as Luca have depended on chemicals used against heliothis, another major pest, in the hope they would also control EFC.

“As yet, no new insecticides have been registered, but companies have expressed interest in our findings. We studied 10 different insecticides and we are confident that, with the data we can provide, registration will eventuate. This is good news for growers,” said Iain.

“Eggplant is a minor crop grown on small areas and EFC is virtually restricted to the crop, therefore the market for chemicals is small. However, companies might be able to extend registration from major pests such as heliothis in tomatoes and capsicums to related minor fruiting solanaceous vegetables, such as eggplant. Companies say that, provided they have the initial heliothis registration, they will be able to extend it to include EFC with the information generated by this project.”

The final report is due at the end of 2008. 



**Pheromone trap in an eggplant crop] Pheromone trap used in a trial eggplant crop. Images supplied by Iain Kay.**

at the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPI&F) have studied the grub and achieved positive results.

“We focused on three lines of attack. One of the main aims of the project was to test the effectiveness of insecticides and ensure compatibility with the integrated pest management (IPM) of other pests,” said project leader, Iain Kay.

in that respect,” he said.

“Finally, and almost serendipitously, we discovered a parasitic wasp that destroys the eggs before they hatch. The wasp is a natural predator and a useful biocontrol agent—it kills the pest before it does any damage.”

Damage caused by the caterpillar is significant, with infestation levels recorded as high as 60 per cent.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- Eggfruit caterpillar crop infestation levels have been recorded as high as 60 per cent.
- A parasitic wasp has been discovered that destroys eggfruit caterpillar eggs before they hatch, enabling successful IPM to be introduced.
- Chemical suppliers say this research project will help them extend chemical registrations for pests in tomatoes and capsicums to minor crops such as eggplants.

**i** For more information contact Iain Kay, Senior Entomologist, Horticulture and Forestry Science, QLD DPI&F  
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Project number: VG05052  
Keywords: Eggfruit caterpillar

# Language barrier a cause for concern

Western Australia isn't just home to a mining boom. Business is booming for grower and exporter Michael Le, who's gone in to bat for LOTE growers. By Angela Brennan. Photography by Westways Colorgrafix.





**M**ichael Le left school at the age of 15 to join his family's horticultural business in Western Australia. Some might see this as his first big mistake, as the road to success is said to be through advanced education, but for Michael it paid dividends. He and his brothers now run a successful vegetable export/wholesale business as well as a real estate and construction businesses in Western Australia and south-east Asia. The horticultural arm of their business is called TLF (Thang Le Family) Exports Company—the only large non-leafline, carrot and fruit producing grower/exporter in Western Australia.

TLF grows, packs and markets tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and capsicums through Australian and Asian chains, and they are increasing their local focus through Australia's wholesale markets. The company comprises about 60 share-farming groups, most of whom are Asian and many of whom are refugees. Thang Le brought his family to Australia in 1982 from South Vietnam so his children could receive a good education. "We got a lot of help in the beginning," said Michael, his son. "It's only fair we pass it on to others."



Working with more than 60 share-farming groups, TLF farms a total of 360 acres. Images supplied by TLF.

infrastructure. The share-farmers do all the labouring and get 50 per cent of the net sales."

Michael knows the horticultural industry well. He is a member of several committees, including the vegetablesWA Committee, the pre-Melbourne Tomato Committee, and the Protected Cropping Working Group, which reports to the Production Advisory Group of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). Earlier this month he also attended the IAC meetings as part of the Market Development Advisory Group.

### Level the playing field

"Industry and government have to face up to some very challenging issues," he said. "There are not enough workers and those we have often cannot speak English. Without workers and water our industry can't survive. The government only wants to bring in skilled workers, but some growers are leaving crops in the ground because of a lack of labour. The Immigration Minister should seriously look at this issue and think about making it easier to work in Australia under a non-skill working visa. We train all the workers here at TLF but still cannot get enough."

Most of TLF's share-farmers do not have strong English, said Michael. "Many have difficulty understanding the instructions and labelling of the chemicals and fertilisers. I went back to school and got a degree in chemistry, so that I could understand these things better, but there is almost no outside help given to farm workers."

He argues that LOTE growers do not have easy access to the latest research or technology, and that government assistance is mostly

“Industry and government have some challenging issues. There aren't enough workers and those we have often cannot speak English.”

Michael condemns the lack of government and community assistance to growers who speak a language other than English (LOTE), and the government's reluctance to provide non-skilled working visas. "Our farm is multicultural," he said. "My brothers and I speak fluent English and Vietnamese, so we take responsibility for all TLF's



limited to the translation of a few pamphlets from the Department of Agriculture. “I spend a lot of time translating. It slows down work but you have to do it. It’s for safety reasons as well as helping people do their job correctly,” he said.

“Australia is classed as having the best and safest quality of produce, and I assure you that every large farm has non-English speaking people working there. What has anyone done to assist with this? For water restrictions and global warming, there are no translations or representatives available to explain or supply data to these people.”

### **Water-wise isn’t enough**

Michael’s family started out near Geraldton, 420 kilometres north

of Perth. Water issues moved them further south to Carabooda in the Wanneroo region, but the water-wars followed them. Wanneroo is considered one of the most rapidly developing urban areas in Australia and the water supply cannot keep pace.

“Many growers have difficulty understanding the instructions and labelling of the chemicals and fertilisers.”

“At the moment we are borderline, but [if we grow] any bigger and we’ll have serious water problems. I’d use recycled water if we had access to those facilities, but we don’t,” said Michael. “The Water and Rivers Commis-

sion limits supplies to growers like us, but what if all growers one day pull the pin because there’s not enough water access? What would we eat then? Imported fruit and vegetables?”

Michael, whose main role at TLF is marketing management, is an

interesting mix of the hard-edged businessman and an individual who respects people and the forces of nature.

From a starting base of three workers 10 years ago, TLF now comprises more than 350

workers. One share-farmer plot is between 5 to 10 acres, each plot growing from 10,000 to 80,000 plants per year. In one year, TLF plants about 3 million tomato plants, eight acres of capsicums under plastic tunnels, 650 thousand Brussels sprouts plants, 70 acres of broccoli, and 20 acres of cherry tomatoes—in all, about 360 acres.

“We’ve expanded our storage in the past few years,” said Michael. “Cool rooms now hold about 1,000 pallets and our packing facility is under climate control, totalling an area of about 5,000 square metres.” However, there are plans to further increase the business’s expansion. “Of course, we are aiming for higher yields,” he said.

# Honouring the best of the best



Growers nationally have been nominated for the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards, now it's down to business for the judging panels, writes AUSVEG's Hannah Burns.

The nomination period for the Australian Vegetable Industry Awards is now closed; winners will be announced at the vegetablesWA 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner at Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth, on 31 May 2008.

A high caliber of award nominations has been received for the five categories—Landini Grower of the Year, Landmark Young Grower of the Year, Bayer CropScience Researcher of the Year, Brisbane Produce Market Innovative Marketing Award and AUSVEG Chairman's Award.

The second phase of the selection process has begun. Industry-appointed judging panels will assess each nomination against a range of selection criteria. Finalists, announced by the end of March, will be interviewed by the category judging panel to determine the winners.

## Time to celebrate

More than 400 growers and industry personnel are set attend the vegetablesWA 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner, sponsored by Landmark, which promises to be a fantastic evening.

Dinner guests have the opportunity to participate in field tours organised by Western Australia's Industry Development Officer (IDO), David Ellement, including visits to the central markets, a major retail distribution centre, and retail stores on Friday 30 May. The annual vegetable and potato levy payers' meetings will also be held on the Friday.

## Grower tour a super idea

The vegetablesWA 60th Anniversary and Industry Awards dinner will be the culmination of a four-day tour of the Western Australian vegetable industry for 10 young growers from Queensland, organised by Queensland and Northern Territory Vegetable IDO, Simon Powell. The tour, which runs from Wednesday 28 May to Sunday 1 June, is being sponsored by rural industry superannuation fund AustSafe Super. It aims for young growers to be inspired by industry high-achievers and build useful contacts.

The tour will provide a great opportunity for young growers to trade ideas about vegetable production, pest and disease control, supply chain management and industry innovation with their counterparts in Western Australia.

**i** For more information about the awards visit [www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au](http://www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au) or call AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098.

For more information about vegetablesWA's celebrations or to purchase tickets to the dinner, contact <[pga-vga@vegetableswa.com.au](mailto:pga-vga@vegetableswa.com.au)> or call vegetablesWA on 08 9481 0834.

Queensland growers interested in attending the tour should contact Simon Powell on 07 3620 3825 or <[spowell@growcom.com.au](mailto:spowell@growcom.com.au)>.



## Want to know how your levy was invested for 2006/2007?



Or simply have some questions you would like to ask?

Join AUSVEG and HAL at the Annual Levy Payers meeting in Perth.

**Where:** Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth WA.

**When:** Friday 30 May (Vegetables 5.00 to 6.00pm

and Potatoes 4.00 to 5.00pm) followed by drinks sponsored by AUSVEG.

Please note, the vegetablesWA 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner and National Vegetable Industry Awards presentations will be held the following evening.

For more information contact AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098.

## Growth spurt for niche industry

Greater networking among wasabi growers is helping the burgeoning industry flourish, though pests are proving difficult to eradicate. By Emily Webb.

**W**asabi growing is a niche industry in Australia. There are about 20 growers, who are almost all located in Tasmania where the climactic conditions are the most favourable for growth.

Angela Sparrow, horticulturalist (wasabi) for the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) Vegetable Centre has been working with wasabi growers in Tasmania for nine years and has helmed an innovative project aimed at increasing the production of Australian wasabi.

One objective of the project, due to be completed this month, is to develop the capacity of an Australian laboratory to produce commercial quantities of tissue-cultured wasabi-planting stock. The other key objectives are to improve product quality through disease management and additional varieties, and to build the networking capacity of Australian wasabi growers.

Prior to 2000, fresh wasabi stems were unavailable to Australian customers. Now, the Tasmanian-grown stems are sold to restaurants, predominantly on the mainland, with demand steadily growing for the product. Pure wasabi powder is also produced by growers and almost exclusively sold to Tasmania's



Sampling wasabi at a field day, June 2006. The field day helped showcase conditions for growing a soil-cultivated wasabi crop. Attendees included growers, researchers, industry representatives, media and consumers. Image supplied by DPIW Tasmania.

Ashgrove Farm Cheese for its award-winning wasabi cheese.

"Fresh wasabi is a high-value product, equivalent to \$100 per kilogram. It is an industry that is building. Growers talk in numbers of plants and the area that wasabi is grown in Tasmania is about half a hectare over 10 sites," explained Angela.

### Imports still necessary

Angela said the results of the project's attempts to replace imported planting stock with tissue-cultured wasabi planting stock had been disappointing.

"The wasabi plant has a range of endogenous bacteria that are very difficult to eradicate. The

sterilisation technique used to get rid of fungal diseases like *Phoma* and *Rhizoctonia*, which are common to brassica vegetables, is often too severe for the wasabi plant to survive," Angela said.

"The tissue-culture laboratories report that they can clean it up enough for it to appear to be okay but then the disease emerges and kills the plant. The wasabi seed and plant must be kept moist and this makes it difficult to kill the bacteria that cause diseases. As only 18 per cent of the 2,200 plants in the study survived, growers will continue to import tissue-cultured stock."

Despite the results with planting stock replacements, Angela

said networking among wasabi growers had been successful. With input from Tasmania government's Department of Economic Development, the project established grower workshops, meetings and social gatherings. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, which funded the project, has also given its support to the development of a strategic plan for the industry. Angela said the strategic plan would be in place by this month.

"Many of our wasabi growers are fully employed in other areas so they are, in effect, 'hobby farmers' and it was encouraging that we always had more than half the industry represented



at our meetings. Improving the network meant that an agreement among growers was made to coordinate their planting and harvesting schedules. For growers to compete against each other is untenable. As wasabi production in Australia is a niche industry there are significant benefits to increased collaboration. Active communication between the growers has made them feel less isolated,” said Angela.

“Fresh wasabi is a high-value product, equivalent to \$100 per kilogram.”

“Wasabi growers supported this project. There is great potential for the wasabi industry in Australia, especially Tasmania. Wasabi fits in well with the unique foods that are already produced in Tasmania. I receive many calls and emails from people saying ‘I want wasabi, where can I get it?’ That tells me that the demand is growing.”

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

- The wasabi industry in Tasmania is growing, helped by the increased networking of local wasabi growers.
- Importing planting stock is still necessary as tissue-culture wasabi planting stock can succumb to endogenous bacteria.
- A strategic plan for the industry is being developed to build the industry and meet increasing demand.

**i** For more information visit: [www.rirdc.gov.au](http://www.rirdc.gov.au) and search for ‘Increasing production of Australian wasabi’

## Asian Vegetable Profile

### Wombok (*Brassica rapa var. pekinensis*)

Also known as: Chinese cabbage, celery cabbage, Napa cabbage, Tientsin cabbage, wong nga bok

#### Background

Womboks have been cultivated in China since the 5th Century and remain one of the most popular vegetables in Asia. Although seeds were taken from China to Europe in the mid 1700s, wombok remained a curiosity among Europeans until the 1970s when commercial crops were grown in Israel and the Napa valley in California.

Like broccoli, turnips and many Asian leafy vegetables, womboks belong to the brassica family. Wombok is not a naturally occurring plant; it is thought to be a cross between a warm climate leafy brassica species (such as buk choy) and the cool climate turnip. There are tens if not hundreds of varieties, ranging from compact round barrels to long, slim cylinders.

#### Where and how does it grow?

While most varieties do best under cool conditions, womboks can be grown at various times of year across Australia. They are field grown and harvested when the heads are firm and appear mature. Similar to open-hearted lettuces, the leaves can be harvested while the wombok grows.

Under ideal conditions (high humidity, 0°C) womboks can be stored with little loss of quality for up to two months.

#### Preparation and cooking

Womboks have a sweet, mild flavour that is quite different to European cabbage. The leaf

blades can be slightly peppery, while the ribs are sweet and juicy.

There is almost no end to the ways womboks can be used, including coleslaw, hamburgers and sandwiches, dumplings and rolls, soups, casseroles and stir fries.

Womboks contain significant quantities of calcium, iron, phosphorus, and vitamins A and C. Like other brassicas, womboks

also contain glucosinolates.

This group of sulphur compounds are widely believed to reduce the risks for certain cancers. They may also limit some factors that lead to cardiovascular disease.



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Native plants border the trial site at Hi-Tech. Hydroponics Group in Virginia, SA.



# Celibate pests? Must have gone native

While indigenous plants have become the poster children for modern Australian gardens, research has found them to be formidable weapons in the battle against pests, discovers Brea Acton.

It's the difference between walking through a property covered in wild brassica weeds—a breeding house for pests such as western flower thrips (WFT)—or a property featuring healthy native grasses, saltbushes and Acacias, with almost no sign of this pest.

This is the vision of scientist Glenys Wood, Senior Research Officer with the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), who has worked on the Revegetation by Design project since 2003.

“The original project was developed to demonstrate the potential for using native revegetation

options to reduce horticultural pests and diseases. We began to look at replacing the weeds with long-lived, deep-rooted perennial indigenous plants to see whether we could grow those plants near crops without them harbouring exotic pests,” said Glenys.

WFT are a particularly dangerous pest because of their ability to transmit the deadly Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV) through crops. In South Australia, WFT cause up to \$20 million in crop losses annually.

“We sampled weed flowers and compared them with the native flowers. There were significantly

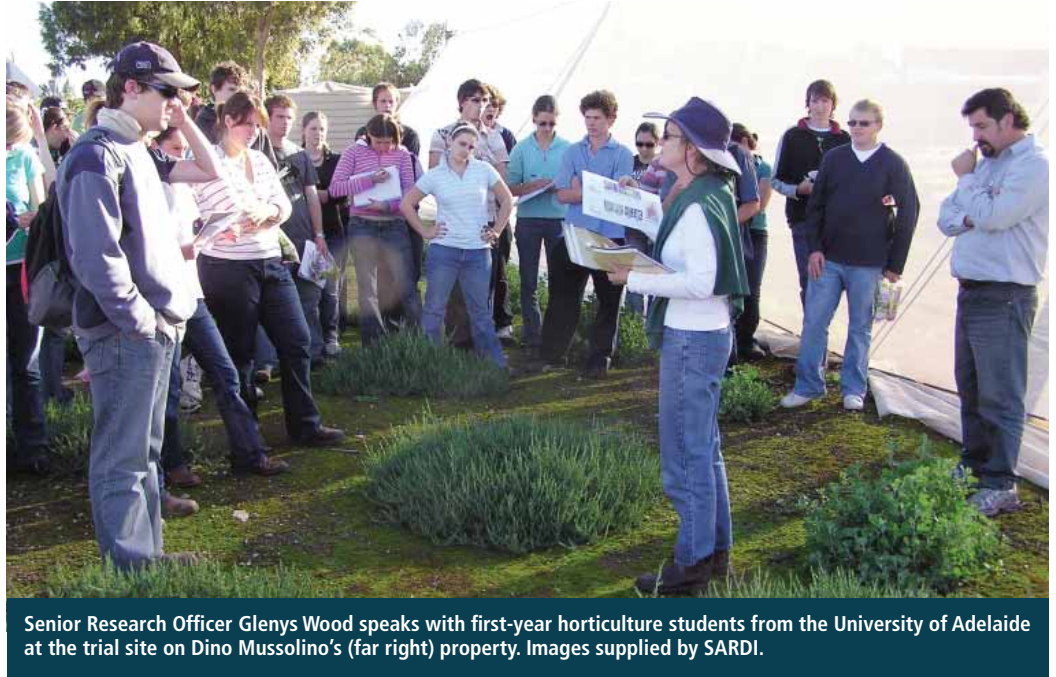
more WFT on the weeds. In fact, they were rare on the native plants,” said Glenys.

In 2006, armed with these findings, Glenys and her team commenced a second R&D project to look more closely at the benefits of parasitic wasps in terms of pest reduction.

“More than half of the beneficial insects on every native species we looked at were parasitoids,” she said.

“The native thrips parasitoid we are interested in is a *Ceranisis* sp. and we now know that she aggressively parasitises the larvae of the WFT. We've been sampling

“Native plants provide a free ecosystem service to growers. Once they’ve grown enough to out-compete weeds, they need minimum upkeep.”



Senior Research Officer Glenys Wood speaks with first-year horticulture students from the University of Adelaide at the trial site on Dino Mussolino's (far right) property. Images supplied by SARDI.

through spring and as summer has begun we've found them in quite large numbers on the saltbushes," she said.

#### Each to their own

Glenys has also worked with growers on their properties to sample 'suites' of native plants, designed according to each grower's particular pest problem and crop type.

"We wanted to look at this type of vegetation planted out at property scale to see what impact it would have on the pest and beneficial populations," Glenys said.

"We developed a system in the lab to identify the plants with foliage that wouldn't support WFT breeding. So far the saltbushes, members of the gumtree family and Acacias look very good. The thrips just won't use them."

Glenys said she has had only positive response from the growers she is working with and all of them are planning to or have already purchased more plants or seeds to extend their revegetation.

Dino Mussolino is one of Australia's leading hydroponic lettuce growers and was awarded the Grower of the Year at the 2007 Australian Vegetable Industry Awards. Dino has also been working with Glenys to trial native revegetation on his Hi-Tech. Hydroponics Group property

at Virginia.

"In the initial stages I had a pretty negative approach. You know—what are those plants going to do?" said Dino. "But the work that's been done has been very good. We feel that it has played a role in minimising infestations of the pests into our crops. There's still a way to go, but it looks encouraging at this stage."

#### Guided design

Glenys says that growers can begin the native revegetation

process on their own, with the assistance of the *Revegetation by Design* guidebook, downloadable from the SARDI website.

"Growers need to look at their property, consider their crops and what pests they have. All the information they need is in the guidebook—the plant data sheets outline what beneficials are abundant on which plant species. Then they need to select the plants that have the beneficials they want," said Glenys.

continued page 48

## Benefits of Revegetation

- By identifying each crop and its associated pests, growers can choose which native plants will be most suitable for their property
- Beneficials, such as parasitic wasps and brown lacewings, thrive in native plants and provide a buffer to crop pests
- Native plants, once fully grown, can out-compete most weeds, which are home to many crop pests
- Substantial cost savings through reduction of chemical weed sprays and rotary hoeing costs
- Reduction of the use of dangerous pesticides
- After the first year, native plants require very little water, being salt-tolerant and deep-rooted
- The planting of natives (and subsequent reduction of weeds) means that properties will look better, covered in healthy native trees, bushes and grasses

**Table 1. Ten-year cost-analysis comparison of revegetation method versus bare earth method**

Weed Control Method	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
<b>Revegetation</b>											
Plant Establishment	\$312.80	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Watering	\$69.25	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Chemical weed spray	\$159.70	\$101.05	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Slashing		\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	\$69.25	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$541.75</b>	<b>\$170.30</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$69.25</b>	<b>\$1,266.05</b>
Inflation adjusted	\$541.75	\$175.41	\$73.47	\$75.67	\$77.94	\$80.28	\$82.69	\$85.17	\$87.72	\$90.36	\$1,370.46
Discounted	\$541.75	\$166.64	\$66.30	\$64.88	\$63.48	\$62.12	\$60.78	\$59.48	\$58.20	\$56.95	\$1,200.58
<b>Bare earth method</b>											
Rotary Hoeing	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	\$138.50	
Chemical weed spray	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	\$159.70	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$298.20</b>	<b>\$2,982.00</b>
Inflation adjusted	\$298.20	\$307.15	\$316.36	\$325.85	\$335.63	\$345.70	\$356.07	\$366.75	\$377.75	\$389.08	\$3,418.53
Discounted	\$298.20	\$291.79	\$285.52	\$279.38	\$273.37	\$267.49	\$261.74	\$256.11	\$250.61	\$245.22	\$2,709.43

The values in the model were derived from calculations based on an average two hectare farm with an area of 500 square metres of uncultivated land and projected over a 10-year time frame. The table is intended to give a general idea of cost outcomes for two different approaches, either planting saltbush tube-stocks or maintaining bare earth around crops. The model is an estimate only, and will vary according to the cost of labour, seed, plants and herbicides. For more information, download the *Revegetation by Design* guidebook from the SARDI website.

A cost-benefit analysis, over a period of 10 years, is also available in the *Revegetation by Design* guidebook and shows impressive savings over the long-term (see Table 1).

“Native plants, especially the saltbushes—which are relatively cheap and often live for more than a decade—will provide a free ecosystem service to growers. Once they’ve grown enough to out-compete weeds, they need minimum upkeep,” said Glenys.

“One of my growers is ordering 1,000 *Rhagodia* bushes, because the parts where we’ve put saltbushes in he’s not had to touch for about four years.”

With a year to go on the project, Glenys and her team will focus on the biology of the *Ceranisis* sp. wasp to try to map when it appears, in what numbers, and on which plants.



**Beneficial ladybirds mating on saltbush leaves.**

“This is a lifetime’s work. I’m passionate to see the native plants used as refuges to increase biodiversity and restore the landscape, minimise the impact of sprays on the environment, and help growers build more resilient farming systems. That’s what gets me out of bed every morning.”

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

- A study has found that native plants are much less likely than weeds to harbour exotic pests.
- Growers can revegetate the area surrounding their crops, selecting native plants that target particular pest species.
- Native revegetation reduces cost for chemical usage and after the first year, the plants require almost no water or upkeep.

For more information visit: [www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers](http://www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers) or [www.sardi.sa.gov.au](http://www.sardi.sa.gov.au) and follow the links to ‘Entomology’, ‘Horticultural Pests’, ‘Revegetation by Design’ to download the *Revegetation by Design* guidebook

Project number: VG06014  
 Keywords: Property scale  
 or contact Glenys Wood, Senior Research Officer, SARDI Entomology  
 Phone: 08 8303 9660  
 Email: <[wood.glenys@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:wood.glenys@saugov.sa.gov.au)>





## No more game-playing for TAGG

Tasmania's protected cropping growers are working together to remain competitive, writes Emily Webb.

The Tasmanian Association of Greenhouse Growers (TAGG) may meet as a group only a few times a year, but the small membership of 17 uses technology to stay in touch.

TAGG president Gary Hippman said association members are spread across the state so face-to-face meetings are limited to the annual general meeting, which is held at the Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association's national industry conference (TAGG members are also associate members of AHGA), and field trips, often to the greenhouse operations of its members.

“The ‘greenhouse passport’ allows employees to walk into a job with higher pay.”

“Association members use email and telephone to keep updated. We invite greenhouse equipment suppliers to talk to us about advances in technology or what is happening in the industry. Our membership is small and stretches from the north-west to the south-east of Tasmania so the time we have together as a group is very important.”

TAGG membership predominantly comprises tomato growers

but it also includes wasabi, cucumbers, lettuce, eggplant growers and two of the largest hydroponic capsicum growers in Australia.

### Fresh perspective

Gary is relatively new to the industry. After 20 years in the printing industry, he bought Lafresh Hydroponics in Roches Beach four years ago. Lafresh produces hydroponic truss tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and hydroponic long-life mesclun.

As TAGG president, Gary hopes to break down some of the barriers that exist among the association, which was established 14 years ago. “As an outsider to the industry, I could see people were protective of the way they do things, which is understandable, but I hope that we can work more collaboratively to share information and support each other.”

The association bands together to coordinate more favourable prices for items like packaging and general greenhouse consumables including tomato bobbins and clips.

“I have encouraged growers to buy from each other if they find themselves flush with product. We are also working with each other to give leads on customers,” said Gary.

“Last year, we were fortunate enough to have the AHGA bi-annual conference in our state. It's not very often we have such a large number of growers and suppliers under the one roof; the networking opportunities were fantastic.”



Attendees visit John and Anna Brandsema's new glasshouse in Turners Beach, TAS, as part of an AHGA conference farm tour. Image supplied by Gary Hippman.

### Passport gives peace of mind

One of the most pressing concerns for TAGG members is finding and retaining employees.

“You have to train people for the greenhouse industry. We have a huge problem in that we lose a lot of staff who can get higher wages elsewhere but they take their knowledge and expertise with them,” said Gary.

“We are working closely with Graeme Smith, who was instrumental in developing the Pathways to Production Program, giving people a ‘greenhouse passport’ in their chosen horticulture field. This enables them to travel around Australia with a degree. It gives them the ability to walk into a job with higher pay and also gives the grower confidence in employing them.”

Despite the challenges small-to medium-sized greenhouse growers face from corporate operations on mainland Australia, Gary said the future is positive for TAGG members and the industry.

“By 2012, Australian supermarkets want to increase the share of hydroponic-grown produce from 17 per cent to 50 per cent.” The opportunity for growers to work together to increase market share has never been greater.



For more information contact:  
Gary Hippman, President  
Tasmanian Association of  
Greenhouse Growers  
Phone: 0439 481 031  
Email: <Lafresh@bigpond.com>



Dr Frank Hay assesses *Phoma* disease at a fungicide trial in pyrethrum at Kindred, TAS, with a multispectral radiometer. The radiometer measures net reflectance from the crop canopy at different wavelengths. Some wavelengths are well correlated with green leaf area and conversely the amount of damage due to disease. It is used as a rapid means of assessing disease in plots as a back up to visual assessments.

# Threats no match for targeted response

Close ties with industry keep Tasmanian researcher Dr Frank Hay in touch with grower priorities. By Barbara Hall.

Dr Frank Hay heads up Vegetable Research in the Burnie-based Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR). The Tasmanian plant pathologist enjoys seeing research benefit the industry by being put into practice on-farm.

TIAR was born in 1996 through an unusual but happy pooling of research capacities by the University of Tasmania and the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW). A further amalgamation in 2007 added the development and extension side of DPIW, and now with a state

government funding boost of \$3 million, TIAR has set up its own Vegetable Centre. “This should greatly increase our vegetable research development and extension,” Frank said.

Frank’s team is working on two projects funded by the National Vegetable Levy. One explores the use of Potassium Silicate in vegetable crops as a means of controlling diseases. The other is part of a national program tackling the *Sclerotinia* fungus, which is common to many vegetables but a major problem for bean growers.

“Initially we are focusing on spore trapping and developing DNA testing for spores, to better understand the fungus’s life cycle. Our goal is to help growers more finely time their fungicide applications—that way they should have better control and reduced fungicide resistance,” said Frank.

## Rapid reaction disables disease

Of Frank’s achievements, what is his career standout? He cites the recent work of his team (including his wife and colleague, Dr Sarah

Pethybridge), which collaborated closely with pyrethrum producer Botanical Resources Australia following a widespread outbreak of a mystery disease that threatened the industry in 1999.

range of career opportunities and skills. There's something for everyone. I'm always impressed by the range of skills that today's grower has to have, from agronomist and agricultural engineer

and Industrial Research, he was struck by how useful research could be and went on to complete a doctoral thesis on viruses in hop crops. "My interest in science (and beer) had been born," he said.

For Frank, interacting with industry is one of the most enjoyable aspects of his job. "Researchers in Tasmania tend to be very close to industry. We get to hear the priorities and the problems very clearly and most of our research involves input from agricultural research and advisory committees. Sarah and I also have our own personal industry advisor—her father runs a 100-acre vegetable and walnut farm in northern Tasmania! 🌱

“I'm impressed by the skill-range today's grower has to have—from agronomist and agricultural engineer to savvy business person and marketer.”

Within one season, the team identified the fungus *Phoma* as the cause and designed an effective management program. This led to average net benefits to growers of \$3,000 per hectare per year. The pyrethrum crop, enormously significant in Tasmania, accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the world's production—second only to Kenya.

What advice would Frank give to young agricultural science graduates choosing a career path? "Agriculture encompasses a

to savvy business person and marketer. The stereotype of the humble man on the land is long gone. It's a very dynamic industry and I feel privileged to be supporting it in a research capacity."

#### Intimate with industry

Frank was raised on a small New Zealand sheep property and, like many agricultural scientists, he started his first degree imagining he would be a grower. However, after a summer placement at the former Department of Scientific



For more information contact:  
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Email: <frank.hay@utas.edu.au>  
Web: www.tiar.tas.edu.au



## Dr Frank Hay career timeline

- 1985 Graduated from Lincoln University, New Zealand, with B. Horticultural Science (Hons.)
- 1990 Graduated from Lincoln University with PhD in Microbiology on virus diseases of hop
- 1990-1996 Scientist at AgResearch, New Zealand, worked on pasture pathology and biological control of nematodes
- 1997 Plant Protection Officer at Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Hobart, worked on *Armillaria* and *Phytophthora*
- 1998-2004 Research Fellow (Plant Pathology) with TIAR, University of Tasmania. Projects included:
  - Eucalyptus bark residues as an organic soil amendment in vegetable production
  - Downy mildew disease in poppy
  - Neck rot disease in onion
  - Storage rots of Japanese squash
  - Nematodes in carrot and pyrethrum
  - Fungal diseases of pyrethrum
- 2005-2008 Research Leader Vegetable Group, TIAR. Projects included:
  - Potato viruses S and X in seed potato
  - Workshop to develop RD&E priorities for nematode control in vegetable production
  - Silicates for disease control in vegetable crops
  - *Sclerotinia* in beans
  - National survey of vegetable crops for virus diseases



# CEO Message

**M**arch is a very important month in the vegetable industry R&D calendar.

At this time more than 50 vegetable growers and industry specialists from across Australia come together to discuss projects in which the National Vegetable Levy funds need to be invested.

This is no easy task. Last financial year, \$13 million of grower levy and matched government funding was allocated to research and development projects that have the most benefit to the industry. Big thanks must go to the growers who give up precious time from their own businesses to discuss what projects they'll recommend.

This year will potentially see a significant change to the way levy dollars are allocated for the 2008/2009 financial year. Last year, the industry aligned the R&D portfolio to the vegetable industry strategic plan VegVision 2020. As a result, a much broader range of projects addressing areas such as leadership, market development and consumer insights will be considered.

Last month, I was fortunate to attend the Mick Young Foundation Trust dinner thanks to Andrew Young, CEO Brisbane Markets. Key speakers were Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Treasurer Wayne Swan and former Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

The highlight was sharing the evening with the new Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke. It is pleasing to note the Minister's enthusiasm for his new role, in taking on the portfolio and not having any pre-conceived views for agriculture in Australia.

Fostering leadership in our industry is fundamental. Victorian

grower John Said was recently selected as a participant on the prestigious Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP), commencing in May 2008. In a previous role, I too was lucky enough to undertake this program and I can assure you that it is not for the faint-hearted.

The ARLP, which extends over 18 months, is open to men and women already active in industry-related leadership roles who want to help shape the future of rural and regional Australia. John's scholarship on the ARLP is partially sponsored through the National Vegetable Levy R&D program.

Selection for the program is highly competitive. Course members must have the capacity and prospects to take a leadership role at regional, state or national levels. The program provides participants with the opportunity to develop and share a vision for rural and regional Australia. Congratulations and good luck to John—the vegetable industry looks forward to you leading it into a new era.



**John Roach**  
CEO  
AUSVEG Ltd

# AROUND THE STATES

## New South Wales



Heavy flood-rain on the far-north coast of New South Wales may not have washed away crops grown in elevated locations, but the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has received reports of minor wind damage and erosion, and warns that the wet summer will cause increased pressure from fungal disease.

In the Sydney Basin there has been a major increase in pests and diseases due to the high rainfall and humidity. In some areas, the heavy rain received since June last year has made it too wet for sowing, leaving some growers without a harvest. The ongoing price increases for gas and fuel are an added burden. Herbicides, pesticides and fungicides have also become more expensive. An unexpected positive from the rain is a decline in flying fox damage due to an abundance of native food in the national parks.

The mid-west New South Wales cauliflower, broccoli and corn harvest is looking good with sweet corn tonnages estimated to be just over 30,000. However, the heat requires ongoing use of irrigation water in the mid-west and southern Riverina and some corn crops are now on bores. The Lachlan River system has virtually no allocation, while the Macquarie and Murrumbidgee River systems have had a small increase. The Murray system has no allocation but has had 55 per cent of its suspended water returned.

### Jane Littlejohn

Senior Analyst  
NSW Farmers Association  
Address: Level 10, Elizabeth St  
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Phone: 02 8251 1885  
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## Queensland



Queensland vegetable growers have welcomed summer rains, which have sparked fresh enthusiasm in the 2008 vegetable production season. To say that the drought has broken would be false, as many high-production areas still need increased rainfall to insure water security for the season ahead.

Queensland growers and Growcom have welcomed the announcement of the Australian Government's decision to instruct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to conduct a formal inquiry into grocery prices. The enquiry is aimed at documenting the current structure of the grocery industry at the supply, wholesale and retail levels, including mergers and acquisition by national retailers. The final report is due 31 July this year.

Urban encroachment on vegetable production areas in south-east Queensland is fast becoming a concern for many growers. Small pockets of land that were once suitable only for horticulture practice are being swallowed up by the increase in housing prices, and relocation of residents to the sunny state. Growers must be conscious of the spatial relevance of their practices to the broader community.

"Growing Wiser Workshop" has been an initiative by Growcom that highlights the best growing practices available to Queensland growers to ensure communities that contain high-production growing areas, such as greenhouse production, can remain sustainable under urban encroachment.

Keeping in line with the Australian Vegetable Industry Needs Analysis in Business Skills & Leadership development, Growcom in partnership with AustSafe Superannuation is planning to fund 10 vegetable growers from Queensland to attend the Vegetable Industry Awards and vegetablesWA 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner in Perth in May this year. This incentive will provide an ideal opportunity for innovative vegetable growers to interact on a state level.

### Jan Davis

Chief Executive Officer  
Growcom  
Address: Floor 1,  
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Fortitude Valley QLD 4006  
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Fax: 07 3620 3880



This year promises to be an exciting one for Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers (BFGV). It was in 1948, 60 years ago, that the association was formed. While it underwent a structure change in 1997 from an association to become a cooperative, the organisation is proud to be celebrating its 60th birthday. There will be numerous events and celebrations cumulating in the BFGV Biennial Gala Industry Dinner on 20 September. It will be a big celebration so be sure to lock in the date.

The BFGV office at Horticulture House is a hive of activity. We now have several project officers working on career pathways, promotional careers DVD, development of the Bundaberg

Horticulture Workforce Plan, water quality monitoring through integrated area wide management, and "Beyond the tap" water communication program.

BFGV is also striving hard for our growers in 2008 on a range of policy and lobbying topics that are vital for the continued success of local horticulture. Sectors such as the ICA and Freedom Inspection Certificate programs, Workplace Rights Ombudsman, Bird/Bat damage control and the proposed removal of WPH&S Rural Exemptions are all receiving attention and member representation.

While the rest of the state has experienced plenty of flooding rainfall, the Burnett catchment has largely missed out on rain and inflows into storages. With only five months left in this water-year, irrigators can be rightly worried about what water is likely to be available for the remainder of the year and beyond. It is vital that communication between irrigators, water providers and regulators be maintained. BFGV is striving for its members in this arena with efforts on both short-term concerns and long-term needs.

### Matt Dagan

Executive Officer  
Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers  
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Fax: 07 4153 1322

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## Tasmania



The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Tasmanian State Government jointly announced on 26 February the appointment of a committee to oversee a new marketing and development program for the Tasmanian vegetable industry. This coincides with the release of a new marketing plan for the industry, and the unveiling of a new brand for Tasmanian vegetables.

The Vegetable Marketing Implementation Committee will be chaired by Dr Susan Nelle, the former Managing Director of National Food Industry Strategy Limited. Susan is currently a research fellow of the Australian Innovation Centre, University of Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn said, "the government is allocating \$850,000 over the next two years from the \$4 million Vegetable Marketing Fund, following the highly successful tractor rally to Canberra".

TFGA President Roger Swain said that, "the mix of vegetable growers and people with skills in marketing and fresh processing combine to bring a new approach to developing the industry, focusing on market development".

Committee members are:

- Richard Bovill**, Farmer and national industry leader
- Matthew Ryan**, TFGA Thirlstane vegetable grower
- Stephen Creese**, TFGA Tomahawk vegetable grower
- Cameron Moore**, TFGA

Scottsdale vegetable grower

**George Rigney**, TFGA

Cressy vegetable grower

**Justin Nichols**, TFGA

Richmond vegetable grower

**Helen Waterworth**, Houston's Farms R&D Marketing Director

**Nigel Carey**, Webster Ltd General Manager.

**Genevieve Turville**

Executive Officer—Vegetable & Agriculture

TFGA

Address: Cnr Cimitiere &

Charles streets

Launceston TAS 7250

Phone: 03 6332 1800

Fax: 03 6331 4344

## Victoria



Last year several Victorian growers participated in Training Needs Analysis interviews conducted by Dianne Fullelove, People Development Manager AUSVEG. The interviews identified there was a need for growers to improve their business skills in areas including business plans, financial, marketing, leadership and people management.

Training programs will become available in Victoria from July this year and growers are encouraged to participate. Any interested growers should register with VGA Victoria office to receive more information.

### National Vegetables Expo Werribee 2009

The Expo Organising Committee was expected to have held its first meeting on 4 March at the Gordon Institute of TAFE campus in Werribee. Chairman Les Giroud extends an open invitation to

vegetable growers and industry supporters to participate in the organisation of the National Vegetable Expo to be held 7 and 8 May 2009.

AUSVEG is organising the 2009 National Vegetable Conference in Melbourne during the same week. This will provide delegates with an exciting and informative variety of industry sessions. There will also be the opportunity for delegates to visit the Expo site at Werribee, where new variety vegetable seed plantings and displays by vegetable industry suppliers will be shown.

### Watson Creek, promotion and markets

VGA Victoria has provided representation to several local groups and recently endorsed industry support to the Watson Creek project in south-east Victoria.

Watson Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial issues, which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. EnviroVeg growers on Watson Creek have reviewed their crop management and drainage systems to protect the creek. With such goodwill and a little more rain, the health of the creek is sure to improve in 2008.

The Victorian division of the National Heart Foundation has formed an advisory group with local council health departments and Melbourne Market Authority, together with growers, wholesalers, retailers and provedore representatives from the fresh produce industry. Fruit and vegetable retailers will be invited to promote to consumers the campaign to "Just Add" fruit and vegetables to their daily meals.

There is increasing pressure for grower organisations to formally support Farmers Markets around Victoria. VGA Victoria invited comments from growers to enable the issue to be thoroughly discussed

and considered by the Executive Committee.

### Executive Committee

Finally, VGA Victoria 2008 Executive Committee held a special meeting in January to analyse and prepare a revitalisation program to improve its services to current members and encourage new membership and participation from Victorian vegetable growers in the coming year.

**Tony Imeson**

Executive Officer

VGA

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West Melbourne VIC 3003

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Fax: 03 9687 4723

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## March 2008

18 March

### Fresh Potato Industry Advisory Committee

Melbourne, Vic

#### For more information:

Contact AUSVEG

Phone: 03 9544 8098

19-20 March

### Processed Potato Industry Advisory Committee

Melbourne, Vic

#### For more information:

Contact AUSVEG

Phone: 03 9544 8098

26-28 March

### Fruition 2008—The Australian Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries Conference

Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane, QLD

#### For more information:

Phone: 07 3915 4200

Email: [admin@brisbanemarkets.com.au](mailto:admin@brisbanemarkets.com.au)

Web: [www.brismark.com.au/fruition](http://www.brismark.com.au/fruition)

31 March

### FarmBis applications close

Queensland—Closing date for applications for subsidy

#### For more information:

Contact program administrator, QRAA

Phone: 1800 623 946

## April 2008

16-18 April

### Hydroponic Farmers Federation National Conference 2008

Lilydale, Vic

#### For more information:

Phone: 03 5427 0162

Web: [www.hff.org.au](http://www.hff.org.au)

## May 2008

18 May

### National Vegetable Levy R&D Priority Identification closes

#### For more information:

Contact AUSVEG

Phone: 03 9544 8098

20-22 May

### Irrigation Australia Exhibition and Conference 2008

Melbourne, Vic

#### For more information:

Phone: 02 9556 7988

Email: [irrigation@etf.com.au](mailto:irrigation@etf.com.au)

Web: [www.irrigationaustralia.com.au/conference/conference.aspx](http://www.irrigationaustralia.com.au/conference/conference.aspx)

26-27 May

### restaurant Melbourne 08

Melbourne Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Vic

#### For more information:

Website: [www.restaurant06.com.au/default.asp](http://www.restaurant06.com.au/default.asp)

Phone: 02 9331 7507



31 May

### Australian Vegetable Industry Awards 2008 & West Australian Vegetable Growers Association 60th Birthday Anniversary Dinner

Burswood Grand Ballroom

Perth, WA

#### For more information:

Website: [www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au](http://www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au)

Phone: Hannah Burns, AUSVEG, 03 9544 8098 (Awards enquiries only)

Phone: Jim Turley, Vegetables WA, 08 9481 0834

(Anniversary dinner enquiries only)

## July 2008

26 July

### NSW Horticultural Industries Dinner 2008

#### For more information:

Contact event organiser, Kirsty John

Phone: 0438 602 763

## August 2008

11-12 August

### restaurant Sydney 08

Royal Hall of Industries, Sydney, NSW

#### For more information:

Website: [www.restaurant06.com.au/default.asp](http://www.restaurant06.com.au/default.asp)

Phone: 02 9331 7507

## September 2008

20 September

### Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Gala Ball

#### For more information:

Email: [info@bfvg.com.au](mailto:info@bfvg.com.au)

Phone: 07 4153 3007



# Your Partner for Added Value



## *Come and visit us at our Open Days*

Our Open Days this year will be held on **Thursday 17th and Friday 18th April** at our trials farm in Victoria (Melways ref: 132 F4), and our representatives will be on hand from 8am on each day to give guided tours and provide additional information.

Our wide range of specialist outdoor vegetable varieties will be displayed in our demonstration field, with the featured product this year being cabbage in its many and varied forms. Onions and shallots (from seed) will be displayed indoors.

*Bejo, a Name that stands for Quality*