

volume **4.6**
May/June 2009

vegetables australia



Special Issue!

17 Conference program
and R&D showcase

26 **Leigh Samwell:**
Bitter-sweet business

32 Vegetable Industry Awards
finalists announced



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A word from the AUSVEG Chairman

While horticulture continues to be heavily impacted by extreme weather conditions, it appears that the industry has avoided much of the fallout from the Global Financial Crisis. However, we need to make a strong case to the Australian Government regarding the inability of the sector to access sufficient funds for business maintenance and associated costs, as credit remains difficult to come by.

In times like this, it's important not to lose our nerve. The vegetable industry faces many challenges—not least of which is cost-containment. However, from literature and figures currently available it seems that we'll be able to ride out the storm—provided we remain consistent and work together to continue

supplying good quality produce.

With the media's renewed emphasis on dietary matters and the health of the nation, the vegetable industry is well placed to increase its presence and partner with governments to encourage healthy diets and programs.

This marries perfectly with the upcoming Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, themed "Growing a Healthy Australia". With kick-off only days away, I encourage all interested parties to register for attendance as this conference promises to be an event of substance.

With an informative and entertaining program, the range of registered delegates indicates that the conference will provide great networking opportunities, including the chance to meet the

new-look AUSVEG board, which I'm pleased to announce has two new directors: skills-based director Mark Napper and grower Paul Bogdanich.

Paul replaces Western Australia director, Jim Trandos. I'd like to thank Jim for his dedicated efforts as a director since being elected to the board in early-2007.

It is also hoped that the new AUSVEG CEO will have been appointed by the time the conference is held, which perfectly positions your Peak Industry Body to take conference messages on board and use them to guide the industry's future direction.

Finally, we farewell John Webster, who has resigned as Managing Director of HAL after eight years with the company. John has been an integral part



John Brent
Interim Chairman
AUSVEG Ltd

of bringing together the horticulture industry. Having been an original HAL board member, I can personally attest to John's diligence and competency; he has always been a great advocate for horticulture.

I look forward to meeting you at the conference.

From the editor



It's shaping up to be a busy period for the vegetable industry. After months of preparation and consultation with industry, the tender document for the contentious National Vegetable Levy-funded Industry Development Program—slated to begin in July this year—has been released (page 9). We'll have detailed coverage of the new-look program and what it means for growers in upcoming issues of the magazine.

The 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference is only days away, so we spend much of this issue previewing the event—look for the "Count-down to Conference 09" pages.

We talk with keynote speaker Michael O'Keeffe (page 22) about the two components of innovation: continuous improvement, and exploring new ways of doing business. There's the full conference program (page 17), and a host of levy-funded R&D articles, featuring projects that will be discussed at the conference's Innovation and R&D Showcase,

including revegetation by design, a new cucurbit ute guide and fusarium wilt of snow peas.

Leigh Samwell, one of Australia's largest Brussels sprouts growers, is our featured grower this issue. He speaks candidly about his concerns for the industry's future and the need for more aggressive marketing of vegetables (page 26).

We meet the finalists for this year's Australian Vegetable Industry Awards (page 32), and highlight opportunities for young growers and established industry leaders, with applications open for the next round of Nuffield Scholarships (page 13) and the Australian Rural Leadership Program (page 10).

See you all at the conference in May.

Jim Thomson
Editor, *Vegetables Australia*



Leigh Samwell: Bitter-sweet business

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“The day of being an isolated producer is all but over. You want to know where your produce is going.”

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vegetables australia

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Changing ASEAN tariffs to impact on vegetables

A new FTA, expected to be ratified at the end of 2009, will affect growers who export to selected countries in South-East Asia, writes Economist Ian James.

The Australia Government has signed off on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ratification of the agreement is expected at the end of this year, with the new regime implemented 60 days after ratification.

In announcing the sign off, Simon Crean, Minister for Trade and Foreign Affairs, said that the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) was the largest and most significant FTA Australia had ever entered.

ASEAN has 10 member

countries. There is peripheral trade with Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia while Brunei already has zero tariffs. The other six members of ASEAN—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam—are of more interest to the Australian vegetable industry. Australia already has an FTA with Thailand and Singapore, therefore the AANZFTA cuts across these.

Analysis still to come

The Horticulture Market Access Committee will conduct a more detailed analysis of the impact

of the agreement on horticulture products in due course. A preliminary reading suggests some gains for vegetables, but not as much as a figurative reading would suggest.

For instance, Indonesia can apply a tariff of up to 25 per cent on potatoes, carrots and onions under present World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. It has varied the rate it applies from between five per cent and 20 per cent over the past couple of years and will apply a rate of 10 per cent next year.

So the reduction to 12.5 per

cent for carrots and onions, and 18.75 per cent for potatoes, in 2025 is meaningless if Indonesia retains the rate it intends to apply next year.

While tariffs to Singapore and Malaysia are expected to be removed swiftly, many of the other tariff reductions will not be introduced as quickly as they could be. **va**

For more information visit:
www.dfat.gov.au/trade/fta/asean/aanzfta

Slow phase-in for reduced tariffs

The ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement will introduce new tariffs for Australian growers exporting to selected ASEAN members.

Vegetables (excluding potatoes)

Indonesia	25 per cent tariff on onions and carrots reduced to 12.5 per cent in 2025. There is a 5 per cent tariff on other vegetables reduced to 0 per cent except for chillies, tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers, some lettuce, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, whose tariff will be reduced to 4 per cent in 2015.
Malaysia	0 per cent tariff on most vegetables (69 commodities) with 0 per cent tariff on remaining 15 vegetables by 2011
Philippines	Carrots 40 per cent tariff reduced to 32 per cent; cauliflowers, broccoli and lettuce 25 per cent tariff reduced to 20 per cent; celery 20 per cent tariff reduced to 16 per cent in 2020. Onions and garlic 40 per cent tariff reduced to 5 per cent by 2018. Another 55 vegetables phased to 0 per cent tariff by 2012 and the remaining 29 by either 2015 or 2020.
Singapore	0 per cent tariff
Thailand	Excluded from tariff commitments—onions, shallots, garlic. 40 per cent tariff phased to 0 per cent by 2013 for cabbages, Brussels sprouts, other edible brassicas, lettuce, carrots, turnips, peas, beans, asparagus, celery and spinach
Vietnam	Carrots 20 per cent tariff phased to 0 per cent by 2017; asparagus, celery, spinach 15 per cent tariff phased to 0 per cent by 2016. Other vegetable tariffs phased to 0 per cent by 2016, 2017 or 2018

Industry development tenders in

After months of planning, the tender process for the revised Vegetable Industry Development Program is underway.

In March, Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) advertised for interested parties to submit proposals to deliver the program from July 2009 to June 2012.

The program consists of six integrated components: Program Coordination; Knowledge Management; People Development; Consumers and Markets; Local Information and Farm Productivity; and Economics. All components, except Economics, are being tendered.


It aims to:

- turn National Vegetable Levy-funded R&D results into practical knowledge
- target all relevant stakeholders through their preferred networks
- develop relationships enabling a two-way flow of information.

Integration is crucial

While the integrated program allows for centralised coordination of industry information and communications, selected communications activities will not be included, such as the

biennial Australian Vegetable Industry Conference. These activities, many of which are managed by AUSVEG, will align with the industry development program where appropriate.

Tender proposals were to be lodged by Monday 27 April 2009. Following this, an assessment involving HAL and the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) will lead to a final recommendation being made to the HAL Board. When the HAL Board is satisfied with this recommendation, the program will be contracted. It is envisaged that the program will begin in July 2009; however, the exact contract date will depend on the quality of proposals tendered and any necessary negotiations with potential service providers. 

 For more information contact:
Lucy Keatinge, HAL Industry Services Manager Vegetables
Email: <lucy.keatinge@horticulture.com.au>
Phone: 02 8295 2342



After the success of Farm Day 2008—where city families visited farms to better understand how farmers manage their businesses and care for the land—preparations are underway for this year's event, to be held from 30 to 31 May. To register your involvement, visit www.farmday.com.au or call 1300 36 70 36.

AUSVEG meets Darwin LOTE growers

NT visit strengthens communication ties with growers and key industry stakeholders.

AUSVEG Communications Manager Toni Davies and Communications Officer Lucy Jarman travelled to Darwin in February to meet with growers who come from a LOTE (Language Other Than English) background.

The meetings were part of the National LOTE project, funded

by the National Vegetable Levy and Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).

Local know-how

Toni and Lucy visited several Vietnamese growers on the outskirts of Darwin, where the consensus was that translation, chemical

use and labour shortages were the main issues affecting LOTE growers.

Toni and Lucy also took the opportunity to meet key industry stakeholders, including Geoff Walduck, Ag Chemicals Advisor from Northern Territory Department of Primary Industries (NTDPI); Kate Peake, Executive

Officer of the Northern Territory Horticultural Association (NTHA); Patti Flannery, Northern Territory Grown Produce Consultant; Jodie Collits, Sales Agronomists from Elders, and Darren Hill, Regional Agronomist from Landmark; all of whom were generous with the time and effort they gave to discussing the LOTE project. 

More funds for PEP

FarmReady lends further assistance to growers.

Primary producers participating in this year's Produce Executive Program (PEP)—held from 3 to 8 May 2009 in Mt Eliza, Victoria—have welcomed the news that the Australian Government's FarmReady scheme has approved a refund of up to \$1,500 for their program costs.

This support is in addition to scholarships from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), which are valued at \$2,000.

PEP organisers manage the approval processes for the HAL scholarships, so delegates are invoiced only \$3,500 plus GST. It is this \$3,500 that FarmReady has approved refunds of up to \$1,500 for businesses registered as primary producers.

While applications for this year's program have closed, interested parties are advised to contact organisers regardless.

i For more information contact:
Anita Pike, Program Manager,
Produce Executive Program
Phone: 03 9904 4172

Applicants sought for the 2010 ARLP

The prestigious rural leadership program is calling for applications for next year's scholarship.

The National Vegetable Levy will again sponsor a vegetable industry representative to complete the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP). The objective of the ARLP is to identify, develop and support committed rural and regional leaders to become highly effective at regional, state, national and international levels.

Each course is made up of 30 to 35 participants. Applications for Course 17 will open in May 2009, and the course will be conducted from May 2010 to September 2011. Participants attend development sessions held in a number of locations including most Australian states and territories. There is also an overseas study tour. Sessions, totalling 60 contact days over 18 months, involve discussions, presentations, workshops, debates and visits.

Apply now

The ARLP is for people, generally

aged from 30 to 45 years, already active in leadership roles in community or industry affairs, who:

- want to help shape the future of rural and regional Australia
- have the capacity, prospects and commitment to lead at regional, state or national levels
- are committed to developing and sharing a vision for rural and regional Australia.

The vegetable industry scholarship covers the course costs of \$46,000 (plus GST). The scholarship winner will be required to contribute \$4,000 (plus GST).

Applications for Course 17 close 31 July 2009. Completed application forms must be submitted to the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation by this date.

2009 participant

Jane Lovell, Managing Director of Tasmanian Quality Assured (TQA), has been selected as the vegetable industry's representative for the 2009 program.

TQA assists primary producers in understanding and complying with the requirements of quality assurance. The organisation provides information and services related to quality assurance, while developing a marketing advantage for quality-assured products.

Jane has worked with many producers, industry organisations, government agencies and regulators, to deliver training and develop systems relating to auditing, team management and communications.

i For more information regarding the industry scholarship, contact:
John McKenzie, Horticulture Australia Limited
Email: <john.mckenzie@horticulture.com.au>
Phone: 02 6366 5000
To download an ARLP application form, contact the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation:
Website: www.rural-leaders.com.au
Email: <info@arlp.net.au>
Phone 02 6281 0680

Recent minor use permits

Permit number	Permit description (pesticide / crop / pest)	Date issued	Expiry date	States covered
BRASSICAS				
PER10261*	Amistar (azoxystrobin) / Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, beans, lettuce / White blister, Sclerotinia rot	03-Jan-09	01-Jan-10	All states except Vic
LEAFY VEGETABLES				
PER7935**	Dimethomorph / Lettuce – leafy (field grown) / Downy mildew	10-Dec-08	30-Nov-10	All states except Vic
PER10720	Betanal (phenmedipham) / Chicory, endive, radicchio, silver-beet, spinach (transplanted crops only) / Broadleaf weeds	11-Feb-09	30-Sep-10	All states except Vic

*Additional residue data required in brassicas, beans and leafy lettuce for renewal

**Additional residue data required in leafy lettuce for renewal



New AUSVEG directors elected

The AUSVEG board will be strengthened by the addition of two new directors.

Two new AUSVEG directors—a replacement state representative, Paul Bogdanich, and a skills-based director, Mark Napper—were elected to the AUSVEG board in March.

Paul replaces Western Australia representative Jim Trandos—who has resigned due to work commitments.

Paul is the Office Manager of Bogdanich Farms, a family-owned business located in Gingin, 100 kilometres north of Perth.

With previous experience in architectural drafting and

information technology, Paul has implemented new technologies on-farm, including the automation and streamlining of various processes and systems.

Paul has worked closely with consultants from government and non-government agencies on issues relating to the environment, water, biosecurity, quality assurance and on-farm best practice.

“I’m looking forward to representing the growers of Western Australia at a national level, as well as working with the board and all concerned to address

issues impacting on the viability and sustainability of the Australian vegetable industry,” he said.

Broad experience

Skills-based director Mark Napper has 25 years experience in Australian agribusiness. He was Managing Director of the Australian Horticultural Corporation from 1998 to 2001, and a member of the Steering Committee that oversaw the formation of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

Presently, he is CEO of Windsor Farm Foods Group, and his

background extends along the supply chain from grower to retailer, locally and abroad. He has experience in finance, marketing and general management, and has developed strong working relationships with all levels of government.

“I look forward to working with the AUSVEG board and industry to help it maximise the return on its levy investment. By ensuring there is constructive engagement and cooperation among all stakeholders, the industry will be able to ensure a strong, sustainable future,” he said. **va**



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HAL revises branding guidelines

New branding guidelines see the vegetable R&D logo out of favour.

The branding for research and development (R&D) projects funded by the National Vegetable Levy has changed under new guidelines released by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

Previously, projects funded by the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government were branded to include a logo from the service provider (such as a state Department of Primary Industries), the HAL logo, and the National Vegetable Levy R&D logo, as a means of identifying which levy had helped fund the project.

Under new HAL guidelines released last year, use of the National Vegetable Levy R&D logo will cease, as HAL no longer supports the use of individual levy brands.

For example, for a project funded by the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the

Australian Government—where a state DPI is the service provider—the following branding elements are required under contract with HAL:

1. HAL logo
2. Recognition of industry levy and matched Australian Government funds.

The state DPI would include its branding, along with the branding of any other funding contributors.

According to a HAL statement: “The HAL communications requirements and approval procedures will be updated and sent to all service providers. A requirement to adhere to these procedures is currently stipulated in all HAL contracts”.

HAL has advised that its members will be informed of this change to branding at the Future Focus horticulture industry forum to be held in Sydney from 24 to 26 May. **va**



HAL no longer supports the use of individual levy brands, including the National Vegetable Levy R&D logo.

RAMROC fights for 'water justice'

Protection of growers' water supplies has been given a boost by RAMROC.

The Riverina Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC) has announced an internal funding allocation of \$60,000 to kick-start a 'water justice' program, and is challenging the private sector in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys to join SunRice Australia, Casella Wines and a number of small businesses to financially support its Water4Food Australia program.

Water4Food Australia is a community-based government relations strategy targeting Canberra and Sydney that seeks to protect water supplies for the production of food in the valleys. It aims to protect communities, food producers and processors from the impact of:

- political and regulatory responses to drought and climate change
- market reforms that restrict water availability for food production
- extreme environmentalism
- ongoing policy and cultural change.

Buybacks threaten growers

“The recent federal ‘Xenophon decision’ to fast-track water buybacks threatens to unleash a tsunami of tax payer funds which will distort the water market forcing the price beyond the reach of battling food producers,” said RAMROC Chair, Terry Hogan.

An increase in federal funding for water and food processing R&D is sought.

Terry said modelling completed by the New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change indicated that the south-west of the state would be hardest hit by rising temperatures and reduced rainfall levels between now and 2050.

“If it's good enough to underwrite ‘clean coal’ technology R&D with around \$500 million, what price does (the) government put on the production of food?” he said. **va**

For more information visit:
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/climateChange/impacts.htm

Webster resigns

HAL's Managing Director calls it a day.

John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia Limited, has resigned from his position after eight years with the company. He will continue in the role until the end of April. The HAL Board has begun the process recruiting a replacement for the position.

In correspondence with key industry personnel, John said he was thankful for the support both he and HAL had received since the company began in 2001. **va**

Levy funds Nuffield Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted for 2010 Nuffield Scholarships.

Applications for 2010 Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships, which opened on 1 April, will close on 30 June 2009. The number of scholarships offered this year will be increased from 16 to 20.

Nuffield Australia Chairman David Brownhill said it had never been more important for Australian farmers to gain firsthand knowledge of global agriculture, which had entered a new, highly volatile era.

"Nuffield Australia gives young farmers and farm managers the opportunity to explore these

issues as they are occurring, bringing back the latest ideas from their international travels

“Applications for 2010 Nuffield Scholarships will close on 30 June 2009.”

to help Australian agriculture develop strategies to meet these challenges,” he said.

Expenses paid

Scholarships for travel in 2010 are valued at \$27,000, sponsored

by leading agribusiness and primary producer organisations, including the National Vegetable

Levy. Scholarships cover participation in a compulsory six-week Global Focus Program followed by a further 10 weeks of international travel as part of each scholar's individual study tour.

Scholars are selected for their

farming and leadership capabilities, and potential to make a valuable contribution to Australian agriculture.

Application forms are available from Nuffield Australia on 03 5480 0755, by emailing <enquiries@nuffield.com.au> or visiting www.nuffield.com.au. Successful scholars will be announced in October 2009. **va**



For more information contact:
Jim Geltch, Chief Executive
Officer Nuffield Australia
Phone: 03 5480 0755
Mobile: 0412 696 076

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Groundwater research increased

The government-funding floodgates remain open for water projects, with a particular focus on understanding and managing groundwater.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Penny Wong, unveiled a number of big-ticket items when she toured the northern Murray-Darling Basin in March. Six projects were announced, with total investment clearing \$13 million.

On-farm efficiency

Three water management projects will share \$5.6 million funding under the Australian Government's On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects) Program.

"These pilot projects will provide the government with a good testing ground for investing in on-farm irrigation infrastructure to use water more efficiently. In exchange for investment in on-farm infrastructure, successful recipients have agreed to give a proportion of their water entitlements to the Australian Government. This is expected to see nearly 2,000 megalitres of water returned to the Murray-Darling Basin's stressed rivers and wetlands," said Penny.

The three projects are:

- Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority to receive almost \$2.8 million for sub-surface irrigation conversion
- Lachlan Catchment Management Authority to receive almost \$1.5 million for projects including upgrading on-farm flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation and using centre pivots
- Murray Irrigation Limited to receive up to \$1.3 million for projects including upgrading existing flood, spray and drip irrigation systems.

"The experience and informa-

tion gained from these projects will help the Rudd Government implement other programs, including \$3.7 billion in priority project funding for state governments and private irrigation water providers to implement major water projects in the Murray-Darling Basin," said Penny.

Groundwater is hot property

To better understand the role groundwater plays, \$5.4 million will be invested to develop a comprehensive national 'atlas' of groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

"Many ecosystems depend on groundwater to support their plants and animals. Until now, little has been known about the location of these ecosystems and exactly how much groundwater they need to survive," said Penny. The atlas is expected to provide

water managers with information about the ecological requirements of the groundwater systems they deal with.

Additionally, \$1.3 million will be provided to better manage groundwater supplies from aquifers in regional Australia.

"Groundwater accounts for more than 30 per cent of our total water consumption—yet it is a finite resource which is only topped up or 'recharged' when surface water seeps into aquifers," said Penny.

"To develop regional water sharing plans that take account of our groundwater resources, water managers need a consistent and reliable approach to determine the recharge rates that contribute to regional water balances."

Manage water quality

Finally, funding of \$876,000 will be used to help improve manage-

ment of groundwater quality in highly-developed aquifers in New South Wales.

"As a result of drought and climate change, surface water in some parts of the Murray-Darling Basin is declining and groundwater is being pumped in increasing quantities as an alternative water source. Because pumping can lead to water moving between different levels of an aquifer, it can cause deteriorating groundwater quality either through changing salinity or chemical composition," said Penny.

The project will investigate up to seven groundwater management areas in New South Wales where there is risk of declining groundwater quality. [va](#)

For more information visit:
 www.nwc.gov.au

Water expert honoured

A new trust will be established to honour the achievements of Professor Peter Cullen.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, announced \$1 million funding to help establish the Peter Cullen Water and Environment Trust, which she launched in Canberra on 13 March—the first anniversary of Peter's death.

"The Peter Cullen Water and Environment Trust will continue Peter's legacy by building water science knowledge and skills in Australia, promoting informed exchange and debate on national water issues, and contributing to improved environmental water management."

The trust's objectives are to:

- protect and enhance Australia's natural environment, particularly aquatic environments and their catchments
- provide and facilitate learning, communications and informed debate about aquatic environments and their catchments, and about things that influence them.

The trust is expected to support early-career researchers. Contributions will be sought from the public and private sectors. [va](#)

Expo draws the big guns

The 2009 National Vegetable Expo allows direct comparisons of different seed varieties, writes Katie Fisher, Victorian Industry Development Officer.

Every two years the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee, Victoria, provides a venue for growers, seed companies and industry suppliers to gather and discuss the best our industry has to offer.

This year the expo—held from May 7 to 8 following the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference—will feature a spectacular display of new vegetable varieties from up to 33 seed companies, including Rijk Zwaan, Fairbanks, Bejo, Lefroy Valley, Terranova and Syngenta.

These companies are the major drawcard at the expo, with many growers returning time and again

to discuss the merits of the varieties on display.

As nearly all seed companies have growing displays on-site, growers can compare, for example, lettuce with lettuce, and cauliflower with cauliflower.

Buses will be arranged to take delegates from the 2009 conference to the expo grounds.

Expert advice

The expo also serves as a valuable link between growers and those

who provide new products and technologies. Exhibits include machinery, chemicals, fertilisers, irrigation, filtration, packaging, computer software and material-handling equipment.

Over the years, the expo has played an important role in disseminating technical information to growers and ensuring the industry remains competitive internationally.

Few events provide more opportunities for personal interaction and technology transfer than industry

expos. As the industry develops and changes its focus to a more national approach, the Organising Committee has ensured that the National Expo caters for a wider audience within the Australian vegetable community.

The 3,500 visitors who normally attend the event are a clear indication that it is strongly supported by industry, and that with its strong national focus, the expo is expected to be a winner with growers. **va**

i For more information contact
Claire Luppino, Expo
Coordinator
Phone: 0427 335 518

National
VEGETABLE EXPO
May 7 & 8, 2009
Werribee

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Vegie conference ready to launch



Less than a fortnight remains until the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference kicks off in Melbourne.

This year's conference will host a wide range of topical, informative and entertaining speakers from Australia and abroad to ensure delegates gain a wealth of knowledge and valuable take-home messages. It will be a great opportunity for delegates to meet the newly appointed AUSVEG Board of Directors, as well as representatives from state associations and the supply chain.

Trading up

The conference program has been designed to provide a balance between in-depth presentations, interactive panel sessions, and opportunities for one-on-one learning and networking. The trade exhibition, featuring more

than 35 exhibitors, will be a fantastic forum for delegates to gain professional knowledge and advice in a casual environment.

Opening at the Welcome Reception on the evening of Monday 4 May, the trade exhibition will run for the duration of the conference, showcasing recent innovations from prominent researchers, suppliers and other industry stakeholders.

The Innovation and R&D Showcase, held on Wednesday 6 May, will offer delegates a smorgasbord of options, with more than 50 presenters in concurrent sessions running across three streams—vegetables, potatoes and general (featuring Asian vegetables and onion-related presentations).

The showcase program has been designed to give delegates an insight into the broad range of R&D projects undertaken in the vegetable industry, and will focus on outcomes, rather than adopted methodologies.

Future focus

As the "Growing a Healthy Australia" theme suggests, this year's conference will look towards the industry's future, given the environmental and commercial challenges it faces. Across-industry topics such as carbon trading and climate change, recycled water, succession planning, strategic leadership, on-farm biosecurity and precision agriculture will all be addressed.

The conference has something to offer representatives from all vegetable commodity sectors, including general vegetables, fresh and processed potatoes, onions, organics, hydroponics and Asian vegetables. The social program, which includes the Welcome Reception on Monday 4 May, Trade Drinks on Tuesday 5 May and the Conference Gala Dinner and vegetable industry awards ceremony on Wednesday 6 May, will encourage delegates to meet and share ideas.

To register online or download a registration brochure, visit the conference website, www.vegieconf.com.au

Trade Exhibitors

- Agsafe Ltd
- Aperio (Filmpac) Australia
- Australian Hydroponic Greenhouse Association
- Australian Potato Research Program (APRP)
- AUSVEG
- Barmac Industries Pty Ltd
- BASF Australia Ltd
- Bayer CropScience
- Bejo Seeds
- Crop Care
- Dobmac Agricultural Machinery
- Dow AgroSciences Australia Ltd
- DuPont Australia Ltd
- Elders Rural Services
- Green Agricultural Irrigation Recycling Pty Ltd
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- Landmark Operations Ltd
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- South Pacific Seeds
- Spraygro Liquid Fertilizers
- Sumitomo Chemical Australia
- Syngenta Crop Protection
- Terranova Seeds Pty Ltd
- Ulma Packaging
- Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria
- Vin Rowe Farm Machinery
- Withcott Seedlings
- Wyma Engineering

Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2009 Conference Program (subject to change)

Day 1: Monday 4 May	
4.00pm	Registration Desk opens Annual Fresh Potato Levy Payers' Meeting
4.30pm	Annual Processed Potato Levy Payers' Meeting
5.00pm - 6.00pm	Annual Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting
6.30pm	Welcome Reception & Trade Exhibition Opening in the Bellarine Banquet Hall 6 & 7
Day 2: Tuesday 5 May	
8.00am	Trade Exhibition opens
9.00am	Australian Vegetable Industry Conference Opening
	Welcome—John Brent, AUSVEG Chairman
	Signature Sponsor— Mike Guerin, Elders Managing Director
	'Speakers Mix' Speakers: Peter Pokorny, Jin Ju Wilder, Michael O'Keeffe and Tom Rafferty
10.00am Morning tea	
10.30am	Speaker: Peter Pokorny, General Manager, Fresh Food, Coles
	Speaker: Jin Ju Wilder, President, Coast Produce Company, Los Angeles
	Speaker: Michael O'Keeffe, Director, O'Keeffe & Associates
	Speaker: Tom Rafferty, Director, Supply Chain STO
	Panel Q&A
12.20pm Lunch	
Session topic: Growing a healthy business—current trends and obstacles	
1.35pm	Speaker: Professor David Hughes, Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing, Imperial College, London
	Speaker: Joanna McMillan Price, Nutritionist and Dietitian
	Speaker: Martin Kneebone, Director, Freshlogic
	Panel Q&A
Session topic: Soil health	
	Speaker: Dr. Frank Louws, Extension Plant Pathologist, North Carolina State University
3.20pm Afternoon tea	
Session topic: Carbon trading and climate change in agriculture	
4.00pm	Speaker: Professor Colin Birch, Vegetable Centre Leader, Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research
	Speaker: TBC
	Speaker: Peter Deuter, Senior Principal Horticulturist, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
	Speaker: Allison Clark, Quality and Innovation Manager, Houston's Farm, Tasmania
4.55pm	Close
5.00pm onwards	Trade Exhibition drinks
Day 3: Wednesday 6 May	
8.00am	Trade Exhibition opens
9.00am	Innovation and R&D Showcase commences
10.15am Morning tea	
11.00am	Innovation and R&D Showcase continues
12.30pm Lunch	
2.00pm	Innovation and R&D Showcase continues
3.30pm Afternoon tea	
4.00pm	Innovation and R&D Showcase continues
4.45pm	Close
7.00pm	National Vegetable Industry Awards and Gala Dinner, Crown Palladium, Southbank

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to present all the information contained in this program, including the Innovation and R&D Showcase, as accurately as possible. The organisers will not be held responsible for any changes in the structure or content of the program. The organisers reserve the right to change any of these details.

Innovation and R&D Showcase - Wednesday 6th May

Time	Vegetables	Potatoes	Vegetables/Onions/General
9.00am	Keynote Speaker: Professor David Hughes, Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing, Imperial College, London	Optimising production of processing potatoes Speaker: Steven Johnson, Extension Crops Specialist, University of Maine	Improving the market development for Asian vegetables Speaker: Dr Jenny Eckman, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
9.15am	Family Farming Health Speaker: Stuart Willder, Sustainable Farm Families, Western District Health Services		Cucurbit Ute Guide Speaker: Tony Napier, New South Wales Department Of Primary industries
9.30am	Grower-friendly tool for comparing management and profitability of vegetable crops Speaker: Alison MacGregor, Scholefield Robinson Horticultural Services	Fertiliser management for potatoes Speaker: TBC	Is there a market pool for IPM? Speakers: Dr Sandra McDougall, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, and Peter Schreurs, Peter Schreurs & Sons
9.45am	Economic update Speaker: Ian James, Vegetable Industry Economist	PCN—onwards and upwards Speakers: Des Jennings, Thorpdale potato grower and Dr Nigel Crump, Department of Primary Industries Victoria	
10.00am	Recycled water use in horticulture Speaker: Dr Daryl Stevens, Australian Coordinator for Recycled Water Development in Horticulture	Potato calculator to optimise both crop yield and quality Speaker: TBC	
10.15am Morning tea			
11.00am	Keynote Speaker: Jin Ju Wilder, President, Coast Produce Company, Los Angeles, USA	Breeding program Speakers: Tony Slater, Department of Primary Industries Victoria; Allan Smith, National Agronomy Manager, Snack Brands Australia; and Keith Blackmore, ViCSPA	Nutrient mapping/yield response: An agronomy package to grow maximum yield Speaker: Trevor Twigden, National Onion Lab Australia
11.15am			Brassica ICM Toolkit CD Speaker: David Carey, Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries Agronomic and post-harvest improvement in iceberg and cos lettuce to extend shelf life for fresh cut salads Speaker: Gordon Rogers, SARDI
11.30am	TBC	Potatoes and technology Speaker: TBC	IPM pathology program overview Speakers: Program overview— Dr Ian Porter, Department of Primary Industries Victoria Program 1 Pesticide strategies— Leanne Forsyth, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries Program 2 Soilborne diseases— Oscar Villalta and Caroline Donald, Department of Primary Industries Victoria Program 3 Foliar diseases— Chrys Akem, Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries Program 4 Viral diseases— Denis Persley, Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries Program 5 Communication and extension— Jeremy Badgery-Parker, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
11.45am	Vegetracker Speaker: Steve Sheppard, Brand Story	Potato viruses and vectors Speaker: Brendan Rodoni, Department of Primary Industries Victoria	
12.00pm	Controlled Traffic Farming Systems for the Tasmanian vegetable industry Speaker: John McPhee, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association	Seed certification and the future Speakers: Mark Holland, Department of Agriculture, Manager, Agwest Plant Laboratories; and Dr Nigel Crump, Department of Primary Industries Victoria	
12.15pm	Precision agriculture Speaker: TBC		

12.30pm Lunch			
2.00pm	Soil health workshop Speakers: Frank Louws, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, North Carolina State University; Jim Kelly, Business Manager, Arris; Alison Anderson, New South Wales Industry Development Officer; and Dr Ian Porter, Department of Primary Industries Victoria	Australian Potato Research Program One (APRP1) Potato R&D overview—what are we doing and where are we going Speakers: Dr Iain Kirkwood, Director of APRP, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Research; Hugo LeMessurier, Managing Director LeMessurier Solutions; Frank Mulcahy, Senior Agronomist, Simplot; and Lucy Keatinge, Industry Services Manger, Horticulture Australia Limited	Family Farming Health Speaker: Stuart Willder, Sustainable Farm Families, Western District Health Services
2.15pm			Work Cover Speaker: TBC
2.30pm		Irrigators and calculators—getting water management right Speaker: TBC	Biosecurity on-farm Speaker: Lois Ransom, Chief Plant Protection Officer, Plant Health Australia
2.45pm			Australian Organic Industry market data and trends Speaker: Andrew Monk, CEO Biological Farmers Association
3.00pm	Succession planning Speaker: Kim Lee, Succession Planning Facilitator, Rabobank	Late blight—a neighbours story Speaker: TBC	
3.15pm		Soilborne disease diagnostics tests—a new tool of the growers toolbox Speaker: TBC	Biocontrol of thrips in stored onions Speaker: Greg Baker, SARDI
3.30pm Afternoon tea			
4.00pm	HAL Strategic Leadership Course Speakers: Jill Briggs, Rural Training Initiatives; Denise Kreymborg, Industry Development Officer, Bowen District Growers Association; Andrew Bulmer, Bulmers Fresh Farm Vegetables; and Kim Vincent, Vincent's Produce	Optimising processing quality of processing potatoes Speaker: Steven Johnson, Extension Crops Specialist, University of Maine	Phase II: Native vegetation to enhance biodiversity, beneficial insects and pest control in horticulture systems Speaker: Dr Nancy Schellhorn, CSIRO
4.15pm	Vegetable plant and soil health Speaker: Tony Pattison, Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries		Determining the cause of onion stunting in South Australia Speaker: Sue Pederick, SARDI
4.30pm	Levy Revenue Service Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Researchers' scramble—black dot, common scab and varieties resistant to common scab Speakers: TBC	Managing mildews—prevention using systematic acquired resistance (SAR) in greenhouse and field-grown cucurbits Speaker: Dr Jennifer Jobling, University of Sydney and Applied Horticultural Research
			Consumer expectations behind health and wellness promises from vegetable consumption Speaker: Jess Sanderson, Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries
4.45pm Close			

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- Sumitomo Chemical Australia
- Syngenta Crop Protection
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- Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria

Develop capabilities

With the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference only weeks away, Jim Thomson catches up with keynote speaker Michael O'Keeffe, Director, O'Keeffe & Associates, and advisor to fresh-food firms globally.

Michael O'Keeffe is a man with a well-feathered cap. A Founding Coordinator of the Global Fresh Food Innovation Network—a group of fresh food companies from the UK, USA, Canada and Australia who share best practice and innovation ideas—he is also Chairman of Premier Fruits Group, an Australian produce supplier with distribution, logistics and marketing capabilities.

Additionally, he is a Director of Houston's Farm, a Tasmanian-based grower and marketer of prepared salads, and Stockyard, a Brisbane-based premium beef exporter. Michael is also a Visiting Agribusiness Fellow with the Department of Primary Industries Victoria and Senior Visiting Research Fellow with the University of Kent in the UK. He shares his thoughts with *Vegetables Australia* readers below.

From your across-industry experience, how does the vegetable industry differ from other commodities? Do these differences help or hinder the vegetable industry?

Vegetables, fruit and other fresh-food industries such as seafood, lamb and beef, all have similarities and differences; it's important that growers are aware of these.

In the UK, 95 per cent of fruit is imported, but UK vegetables are produced locally. For example, Tesco receives all on-spec fruit from its overseas producers, be it Turkey, Australia or wherever. As very little fruit is grown in the UK, there is little off-spec fruit available to consumers. However, with vegetables, as there are varying sizes and shapes, all off-spec vegetable produce needs to find a home.

There are challenges in any industry; some view these challenges as hassles, others see them as opportunities. In Australia, this could be why we have such a vibrant independent fruiterer sector. As most Australian fruit and vegetables are consumed domestically, independent retailers can do strong business by selling produce that doesn't fit the specs of Coles and Woolworths. Though the flavour is fine, the produce might be too small or large for the supermarkets, or an unusual shape.

Wal-Mart and ASDA in the UK try to relax specs to make them grower-friendly, allowing for a broader range of 'acceptable' produce. It's a matter of how the retailer, supplier and grower work together to address these issues.



for competitive edge

How important is it for a business to have a sustainable point of difference?

We all need to offer our customers something different—otherwise buyer choice is driven by price. Point of difference is based on developing capabilities within a firm. You need to think carefully about which capabilities need to be developed within your business. Of the companies I work with around the world, the most successful are those that have the ability to not only develop capabilities but also leverage the capabilities of other businesses in the supply chain. You might have a very good packer, so you leverage these skills to give you an advantage over your competitors. Or your retailer may have detailed

scanning data that they are prepared to share with you, which you can use to develop consumer insights.

A good example of this leverage is 3Ms, a vegetable-growing group in the UK, which I'll discuss in greater detail at the conference. 3Ms has a close relationship with its retailers, but uses "category manager" suppliers to manage the day-to-day relationship with the retailer. This strategy allows 3Ms to focus on production.

Growers should consider the capabilities they can develop: production, supply, marketing and branding, or all three.

Are growers becoming more involved in the supply chain?

Let's focus for a moment on the term "chain". If I'm a grower working on my farm, then I'm already part of the supply chain. What growers need to think about is how involved they become in other aspects of this chain. Increased involvement could be as simple as developing stronger relationship with other supply chain partners.

Growers also need to consider where their crop is going—for example, to wholesalers and/or supermarkets—and decide whether this is appropriate.

Vegetable growers need to think about increased marketing activity. There is also a good argument for developing close relationship with wholesalers, and taking your produce to wholesale markets as well as supermarkets. The day of being an isolated producer—which you can still get away with in cropping, beef or lamb—is all but over. For horticulture, you want to know where your produce is going, and continually reassess whether this is the best for your business.

This plays out differently in different countries. For example, wholesalers are not dinosaurs in Australia. Just because the wholesale sector isn't as vibrant in the UK or the US doesn't necessarily reflect on what happens locally.

If growers want to make their businesses more profitable/efficient/sustainable, what do you recommend they do?

As a general rule, most of us can do better, be more productive, in what we do on a daily basis. For growers, the reality is that the cost/price squeeze will not disappear. So, continuous improvement through improved productivity is relevant to everyone, regardless of sector or industry. For those who want to improve profitability/efficiency/sustainability, it's a good place to start.

However, there are two dimensions of innovation—continuous improvement, and exploring new ways of doing business. The former doesn't develop different ways of targeting new consumers or competing in the marketplace, so it's a matter of finding a balance, and managing both these areas simultaneously.

“The day of being an isolated producer is all but over. You want to know where your produce is going.”

What will your message be to growers at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference?

The underlying message is that retailers globally are looking at new ways of doing business. There are genuine opportunities for those within the rest of the supply chain to get involved and be active participants in these ventures. Exports are also going to be a growth market. It's not necessarily about being proactive and approaching retailers, but it is

about having a sensitive antenna to keep abreast of any shifts, changes or opportunities.

Growers need to be aware that, globally, not all retailers have similar business models to Coles and Woolworths. There are other options out there, and I'll mention some of these at the conference.

i To hear Michael O'Keefe speak at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, visit www.vegieconf.com.au for information about conference registration

Milk cucurbit protection for all it's worth

Powdered milk may be a surprising saviour for growers whose crops are suffering from powdery mildew, discovers Emily Webb.

Workshops have been held in the major Queensland cucurbit production areas of Bowen, Gumlu, Burdekin and Bundaberg to share the findings of a research project that aims to help growers better manage powdery mildew in field and greenhouse cucurbits.

Powdery mildew is a devastating disease for cucurbit producers but the three-year project had found powdered milk to be an effective protectant, said Plant Pathologist Dr Gerry MacManus.

"Milk supposedly changes the pH of the leaf surface, which makes it unfavourable for the powdery mildew pathogen. We mixed the powder into milk and sprayed it on the plant surface. It is an ecologically safe way to combat the mildew," he said.

Fungicide alternatives such as powdered milk and plant nutrition formulations—including potassium bicarbonate and silicon—will be promoted for use as part of a protectant-fungicide program.

"These alternatives should be integrated with systemic fungicides to minimise the development of resistance against the systemic diseases," said Gerry, adding that the research conducted has given growers a greater choice of cucurbit varieties from which they could select.

Size matters

Burdekin growers John and Loretta Mauro, two of the biggest producers of button squash in



Dr Gerry MacManus applies liquid milk as a protectant to control powdery mildew on zucchini varieties. Image supplied by Chrys Akem.

Australia, participated in the project. John said the findings were helpful in suggesting to growers what cucurbits varieties were the best to grow.

With a large-scale operation of 16 hectares, John found that systemic fungicides worked best for them. However, he noted that this wouldn't necessarily be the case for all growers.

"Protectants such as powdered milk are better if you grow on a smaller scale," he said.

John valued contributing to the project and said it was good to share information with other growers.

Spray smart, reduce costs

Using zucchini as an example of a cucurbit where varietal resistance was a key factor in

managing powdery mildew, the project found that the best varieties for tropical and subtropical areas were Crowbar and Caleida.

"These findings are out of more than 25 different varieties evaluated across locations. Using Congo, which is highly susceptible to powdery mildew, as an example, if a grower continues growing this variety, he will depend on frequent seasonal fungicide sprays to obtain acceptable yields," he said.

"If the grower changes to a more resistant variety such as those identified in this study, the number of sprays needed to obtain good yields can be greatly reduced."

A brochure summarising the project's findings will be distributed to growers and industry

stakeholders.

Gerry said the study would also provide guidelines to help growers minimise the number of fungicide sprays they make, based on weather readings and disease levels within crops.

"This will help growers spray only as needed, as opposed to the current wide practice of routine calendar sprays, which can be extremely costly and wasteful."

Findings of this project will be communicated to delegates of the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference at the R&D showcase. 

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Spraying powdered milk on cucurbit crops changes the pH of the leaves, making it an effective protectant against powdery mildew.
- Fungicide alternatives, such as powdered milk, can be used in tandem with a protectant-fungicide program.
- The varieties of cucurbits grown are also important. For example, Crowbar and Caleida zucchinis were more resistant to powdery mildew than other tested varieties.

For more information contact:
 Dr Gerry MacManus, Plant Pathologist, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
 Email: <gerry.macmanus@dpi.qld.gov.au>
 Phone: 07 4720 5111
 or visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
 Project number: VG05054
 Keywords: Powdery mildew
 or register to attend the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

R&D project preview

Rhubarb group scoping study

Project number: VG08088

Start date: July 2009

End date: June 2010

Project leader: Dr John Thomas, Senior Principal Plant Virologist, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Email: john.thomas@dpi.qld.gov.au

Phone: 07 3896 9371




Viruses have had a major impact on rhubarb production across the eastern states of Australia, reducing plant vigour, longevity and yield.

This project is an extension of VG05053, which established the presence of a number of viruses in rhubarb crops. It also established detection assays for most of these viruses, and studied their epidemiology and reinfection rates into healthy plantings.

A protocol was developed for the production of a virus-free rhubarb cultivar through tissue culture. This work has provided the basis for disease management strategies and key elements for an industry-managed clean planting-material scheme.

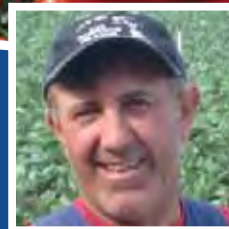
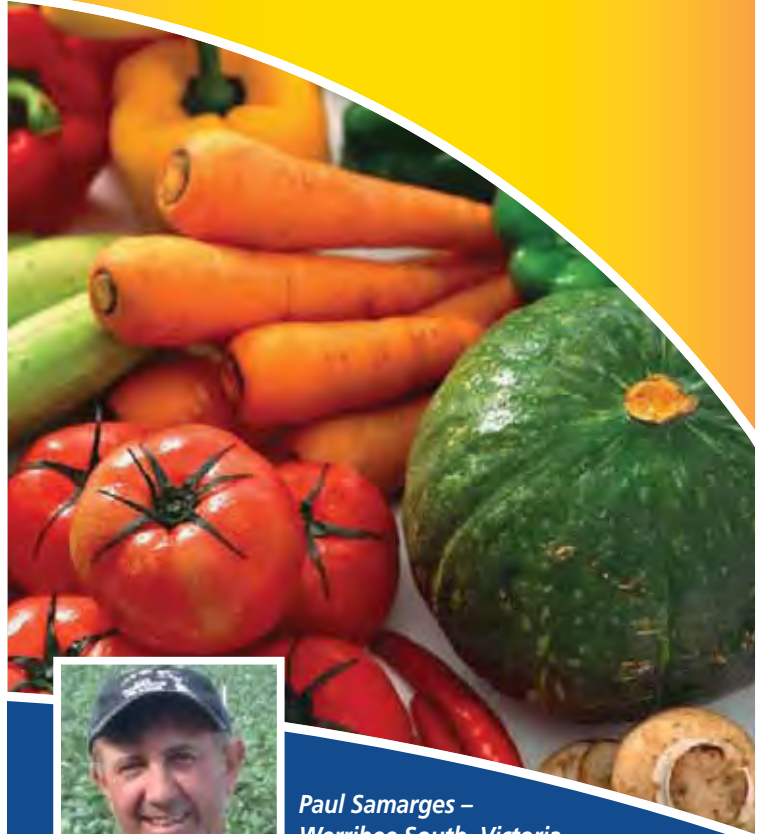
The scoping study aims to produce an antibody-based detection assay for Rhubarb closterovirus, which will complete the availability of simple indexing tests for all important viruses. This is critical for establishing the virus status of planting material.

Conditions for the establishment of additional cultivars through tissue culture and subsequent acclimatisation will also be determined. This work is to be completed by Sharon Hamill, a DPI&F collaborator. It will allow the rhubarb industry to manage the commercial production of tissue-cultured, high-health planting-material. 

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Bitter-sweet

Funding for marketing activities and increased mechanisation are necessary steps for the vegetable industry, according to grower Leigh Samwell. He spoke to Angela Brennan about an industry that's doing it tough. Photography by Jim Oatley.



Leigh Samwell—of Samwell & Sons Brussels sprouts in South Australia—has strong views on the status of vegetable growers. “Take us out of the equation and the civilised world will collapse. Empty bellies cause revolutions,” he said, handing over a photo of what is written above the front entrance at the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC.

When Tillage begins Other arts Follow—The Farmers therefore are the Founders of Human Civilization (Daniel Webster 1840)

“It seems they understand this in America, but they don’t get it here. Growers have an enormous impact on society but in Australia we are not recognised for what we do,” he said.

Diminishing numbers

Fifty years ago, Ray Samwell was among an increasing number of growers in Summertown, South Australia, specialising in Brussels sprouts. Ray died in 1993, but not before setting up Samwell & Sons, a 285-hectare property at Mt Barker, 45 kilometres from Adelaide’s CBD, now managed by his two sons, Leigh and Kent.

Leigh is sceptical about the future of Australia’s vegetable industry. Since the 1960s, the number of Brussels sprouts growers in South Australia has slumped from about 30 to two—Samwell and one other. Nationwide, there are less than 20.

“This is a minor crop, but it’s worth over \$10 million nationally, and we could lose it. By the time I retire, Australia could be import-

ing all of its Brussels sprouts,” he said. Frozen sprouts from Belgium are already on Australian supermarket shelves.

“We don’t have sufficient government and industry support for this product. My family grows up to 50 tons per week. Australia grows up to 200 tons. It would be sad to lose it all to Europe.”

Marketing funds needed

Leigh sees production horticulture at the ‘grumble-end’ of the marketing and promotion chain.

“Vegetables are too cheap; growers do not get adequate returns for their efforts. Marketing is almost non-existent. All the other big industries, such as meat and livestock, have funding for marketing. That’s where we as an industry are letting ourselves down. Consequently, we are seen as a low-profile industry and cannot attract the same level of expertise as do more glamorous specialities,” he said.

“This situation is hardly a draw-card for young people needed to replace retiring growers. They know they will work themselves silly and get paid a pittance. Reward for effort is not there.”

Leigh feels that community and government expectations on growers are unreasonable. “Government meddling is frittering away our hard-earned livelihood. We are not superhuman, yet we are expected to not only provide perfect vegetables, but also follow-up on immigration requirements of our many non-Australian workers, contend with

Continued page 28

business

Leaving loose behind

In a nod to overseas trends, Samwell & Sons has introduced pre-packaged Brussels sprouts to consumers at supermarkets.

In the early 1990s Leigh Samwell spent three weeks on a Brussels sprouts research tour of the UK, Holland and USA.

"Coming from the southern hemisphere I was not seen as a threat to their markets, so I was helped a lot. From this trip I learned the value of machine harvesting and packaging," he said.

"This is the way of the future. Overseas there are no loose sprouts—they are all prepacked. Consumers love it: fresh, clean, easy to drop into the shopping trolley."

Consultation with supermarkets leads to timely roll-out

"I sat on the idea for a few years. In Australia, vegetables are displayed loose. Until recently it did not seem the time for packed sprouts, and I had to consider what sort of packaging and how to establish it on-farm," he said.

"I consulted major supermarkets—spent hours looking at how products were packed in their shops; I went to the AUSPACK Trade Show in Sydney. In the end, timing is a gut feeling.

"We settled for small 250 gram and 400 gram pillow pack bags off a vertical form fill machine. All up, it cost \$200,000 to set up, and the first packs were on supermarket shelves four years ago."

The locally-grown and packed sprouts are dated and well labelled with nutritional information. [va](#)



diabolical water problems such as irrigation and bore monitoring, the Horticultural Code is a headache, set up for some but with the vast majority not wanting it, and almost impossible administrative levels of quality assurance," he said.

"Considering all this, I truly believe Australia runs the risk of losing its vegetable industry altogether."

Success despite the odds

The current picture at Samwell & Sons does not reflect Leigh's frustration with the industry, as the company has grown to become one of Australia's largest producers of Brussels sprouts, growing more than one million plants per year, with an annual yield of almost 1,200 tons.

Modern varieties, progressive technologies and innovative marketing strategies have created an impressively well-resourced and energetic enterprise.

For Leigh, who heads sales and marketing, it is about hard work, efficient harvesting and quality control.

"We work a 15-month growing season, beginning from June, with the final harvest in August the following year. The only time we are out of the market is from September to December," he said.

Australia's Brussels sprouts seed is imported from Holland with different hybrids varying in size and sweetness. A benefit of the new varieties is more uniform maturation of the plants, facilitating machine harvesting that enable workers to clear a plant in one pick.

Brussels sprouts grow in a spiral up the stem, with as many as 100 sprouts (two to three kilograms) per plant. Hand-pickers gradually remove mature sprouts from the base up. This can take up to five picks, over an eight- to 10-week period.

The Samwells are gradually moving away from handpicked varieties with noticeable benefits. A machine can fill about 16 bins per day with no need to return to that field. One hand-picker

“All the other big industries have funding for marketing. That’s where we as an industry are letting ourselves down.”



should manage one bin per day, but must return to plants as the sprouts mature.

Beat the heat

Machine harvesting also offers unarguable benefits against South Australia’s wicked summer heatwaves.

“In February, we had a run of six days over 40 °C. No vegetable crop can survive that sort of heat and we lost a lot. In summer we have to harvest very efficiently. Machines can work in any heat, or into the night if necessary,” said Leigh.

The key to tasty Brussels sprouts is freshness, which means keeping the sprouts cool. Samwell & Sons achieve long-term freshness through a cool chain—that is, removing the field heat within an hour of picking through hydro-cooling,

and maintaining near-to-freezing temperatures while sprouts are sorted and packed, ready to be transported to local, national and international markets.

The difficulty is maintaining that cool temperature from shed to supermarket shelf.

“The infrastructure is satisfactory. My complaint lies with the people within the system who either don’t know or don’t care that the infrastructure is set up to maintain the best possible conditions for the freshness of our product,” said Leigh.

“My dread is that our load will be left waiting in an uncooled environment, such as on the market floor or beside the truck, for hours, while quality checks are undertaken.”

Leigh laments the move away from iced polystyrene boxes, which he said provided near-

perfect conditions for transport.

“The supermarkets have their reasons for dispensing with them, but it is in their interests to ensure that produce is delivered as fresh as possible to consumers. After it leaves our shed this is usually beyond our control,” he said.

“We do our best, but society, in general, wants more for less. The people working down the chain will often do less and expect more, and without a doubt, vegetable growers have to do more. I know that in general, we will get less.” **va**

Access all areas

Growers and exporters who want to gain a better understanding of Asia's fresh produce sector can attend a tour to Hong Kong and China later this year.

The enormous interest for vegetables in Asia is just one reason why Australian vegetable growers and marketers should attend the next Asia Fruit Logistica, which will be held in Hong Kong from 2 to 4 September 2009.

Asia Fruit Logistica is the only trade fair in Asia that focuses solely on the fresh produce sector and value chain for the entire Asian region. Don't let the title mislead you—Asia Fruit Logistica features vegetables just as prominently as it does fruit.

The exhibition has established itself as the best place to gain an overview of the Asian market, preview new products and varieties, establish new business contacts and learn about the latest trends in marketing fresh produce. Last year's event attracted 650 delegates from 40 countries with exhibitors from all around the world.

Asiafruit Congress will be held over the same three days as Asia Fruit Logistica. Organised by *Asiafruit* magazine, Asiafruit Congress will feature international speakers experienced in vegetable



Growers who participate in the Asia Fruit Logistica and Asiafruit Congress tour will also visit Hong Kong's Wan Chai wet market.

production and marketing in Asia. The congress and the exhibition package offers double the opportunity for delegates to network and learn about Asia's fresh produce sector.

Tour opportunity

AUSVEG is working with Quadrant Australia to develop a 10-day

tour tailored to meet the needs of those in the vegetable industry. Tour participants will attend Asia Fruit Logistica and Asiafruit Congress as well as visiting wholesale markets and supermarket distribution centres, such as PARKnSHOP and Wellcome.

To see how Hong Kong efficiently handles its vegetable imports, tour

participants will spend time at the Port of Hong Kong—one of the busiest container terminals in the world. A visit to the Air Cargo Terminal will show how sophisticated logistics enable this facility to meet the enormous air capacity flying in and out of Hong Kong International Airport. The tour group will also meet with Austrade

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representatives for a behind-the-scenes look at how the Chinese vegetable supply chain operates.

After Asia Fruit Logistica, the tour will travel into neighbouring mainland China to visit vegetable production areas and see the unique Chinese markets in action.

“Asia Fruit Logistica features vegetables just as prominently as it does fruit.”

See it for yourself

Tour leader Jonathan Eccles said that despite its name, Asia Fruit Logistica had a heavy emphasis on vegetables.

“With so much talk about Chinese-grown vegetables dominating the Asia-Pacific region, this tour is a great opportunity to see firsthand some of the many Chinese businesses specialising in fresh and processed vegetables, as well as those from other countries,” he said.

“This is an event that all serious vegetable business operators should attend not just those interested in exporting.”

As the tour is supported by the National Vegetable Levy, participants may be eligible for funding support. Tour numbers are limited, so interested parties are advised to contact Quadrant Australia soon.

For more information contact:
Quadrant Australia on
1300 301 128
or visit
www.quadrantaustralia.com

Asian Vegetable Profile

En choy (*Amaranthus tricolor*)

Otherwise known as: Amaranth, Chinese spinach, yin tsai, bayem, pigweed

Background

En choy can be easily identified by its dark-red and bright-green leaves. Amaranth seed has been used like a grain crop for thousands of years, most notably by the Aztecs for whom it had religious significance. It is particularly suitable to developing countries as it is high yielding, tolerates dry conditions and the hand-harvested seeds can be ground into a protein-rich flour.

Other varieties of amaranth are used as ornamentals due to their brilliantly coloured foliage. Some varieties are used as leafy vegetables, which are common throughout Asian and into eastern Africa.

En choy is related to beetroot and, like beetroot, its bright red colour comes from potent antioxidants called betalains. These are water soluble, so they colour the water during cooking.

Where and how does it grow?

En choy is an erect tropical annual. Its long-stemmed leaves can grow to five inches long, with notched or rounded tips.

It grows very well in warm climates, and can be harvested 30 days after sowing, by the cut-and-grow-again method. Seeds are very small and will germinate best at temperature above 18 °C under dark conditions. Thin plants during the growth if necessary.



Preparation and cooking

En choy's flavour and texture is usually similar to English spinach, being mild with a certain “meaty” quality. The leaves and shoot tips should be lightly steamed or stir fried until just wilted—it quickly turns to mush if overcooked.

En choy has a short storage life and should be used as soon as possible after purchase. If necessary, it can be wrapped in plastic and stored for up to two days in the refrigerator.

The leaves are rich in minerals (calcium, iron, magnesium,

phosphorus, potassium and zinc) and vitamins (vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin C, riboflavin and foliate). **va**



For more information contact:
Dr Jenny Ekman, New South
Wales Department of Primary
Industries

Email: <jenny.ekman@dpi.nsw.gov.au>

or register to attend the 2009
Australian Vegetable Industry
Conference, where Jenny will
be presenting an update about
Asian vegetables.

Finalists announced for Vegetable Industry Awards



The Australian Vegetable Industry Awards identify and recognise excellence across the vegetable industry. Following an extensive nomination and short-listing process, the industry has identified the following finalists as contenders for the awards. Winners will be announced at the gala dinner for the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, held on 6 May at the Crown Palladium in Melbourne.

Brisbane Produce Market Innovative Marketing Award



Sponsored by Brisbane Markets Limited

The Brisbane Produce Market Innovative Marketing Award recognises individuals or businesses who, in the past three years, have created new market opportunities for vegetables or vegetable products through innovative marketing concepts. Short-listed finalists have challenged traditional perceptions of marketing and had a significant impact on the broader industry.

Houston's Farm

As a vertically-integrated business situated in Tasmania's Coal River Valley, Houston's Farm has four properties and an on-farm processing plant, where leafy salad greens are triple washed and packed.

As local pioneers of pre-washed and packed salads more than 20 years ago, the company captured the attention of mainland buyers. It now supplies both Coles and Woolworths nationally (except Western Australia) and is known for the quality of its produce.

Early on, CEO Anthony Houston recognised the importance of innovation. In 2007, Houston's Farm was awarded a \$100,000 bursary from Woolworths to help develop a blueprint for analysing the carbon footprint of fresh produce grown in Australia



Ladybird Organics

Ladybird Organics' innovative contribution to the industry has been the development of a biodegradable plastic made from corn resin that contains all the positives of conventional plastic, and increases product life by approximately 30 per cent.

Made from poly lactic acid and known as "PLA", the plastic is used to package Ladybird's salads. This has expanded the organic market by achieving 2 million sales per annum in only 18 months since its launch. A key achievement has been accessing major supermarkets.

Both the produce industry and other non-competing industries have begun to investigate biodegradable packaging as a result of PLA. In addition, Ladybird Organics has been asked to participate in seminars and training DVDs about biodegradable packaging.

Website: www.ladybirdorganics.com.au

Landini Grower of the Year Award

Sponsored by Landini Tractors



The Landini Grower of the Year Award recognises outstanding practices across many aspects of vegetable production, including growing, environmental management, staff management and product quality. Growers short-listed for this award have shown to be innovators in their field and active contributors to the broader industry.



Lisa Crooks

Parsley and radish grower Lisa Crooks encourages the concept of community. For nearly two decades, she and her husband Ray have farmed in Queensland's Chambers Flat, where Lisa helps ensure neighbouring growers comply with environmental practices for sustainable production.

As someone who uses best practice on-farm, Lisa has organised workshops for local growers to learn about their roles and responsibilities. This has been in response to encroaching urban sprawl and unsubstantiated complaints from residents, which led to the threat of legislation being introduced that would render market garden activity in the area illegal.

Lisa continues to help the industry by informing local councillors about existing regulations and legislation. She is also a member of the Production Advisory Group, which is part of the National Vegetable Levy fund-allocation process.

Tom Schreurs

Tom Schreurs is a director of J. & J.M. Schreurs & Sons, a Victorian business that farms 625 acres, producing celery, spinach, leeks and salad mix.

Tom has been a steadfast contributor to the industry with his participation as an executive member of VGA, as a consultative committee member for the Koo Wee Rup water-supply protection area, and as a grower representative with the vegetable integrated pest management (IPM) working group.

Tom lobbied hard for the recycled class A water for growers and horticulturalists in and around the Cranbourne area over many years prior to its connection.

For the past 30 years, Tom has been developing and improving celery seed varieties. His work has gained recognition overseas where the seed is in high demand.



Kim Vincent

Having been in the vegetable industry for only eight years hasn't stopped Kim Vincent from making her mark. The Founding President of the Hydroponics Association of the Mid North Coast now grows on 40 acres of land, along with 5,000 square metres of hydroponic cultivation.

In addition to being a member of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), which makes recommendations to the HAL board about investment of National Vegetable Levy funds, Kim has also been proactive in promoting local produce in the Coffs Harbour region, where her property is located.

Kim has opened a retail outlet that sells only local produce, which gives primary producers in the area another avenue for reaching consumers.

Landmark Young Grower of the Year Award

Sponsored by Landmark

LANDMARK

look to us

The Landmark Young Grower of the Year Award recognises a vegetable grower under the age of 35 who has shown excellent business acumen and innovation in his/her chosen area of vegetable production. Short-listed finalists have shown a high level of initiative in their approach to business and are recognised for their commitment to industry.

Tim Harslett

Fourth-generation grower Tim Harslett returned to the farm he grew up on in Stanthorpe, Queensland, after completing his Bachelor of Agriculture at the University of Queensland. Summer months see up to 50 people employed on the 500-acre property, farming celery, Chinese cabbage and mini Cos lettuce.

Tim is now a part-owner of the family business, where he's worked full-time for almost seven years.

Last year, Tim was awarded a Nuffield Farming Scholarship, which saw him spend 20 weeks travelling the world to investigate mechanisation in the vegetable industry and alternative methods of weed and disease control. Of the 2008 Nuffield Scholars, Tim was chosen to attend the Duchy College "Challenge of Rural Leadership Course" held in England in late-2007.



Nathan Clackson

The increase in Australia's Asian vegetable production in recent years is due in no small part to the efforts of Nathan Clackson, who in 2007 converted a weed-infested, former grape-tomato farm in Peats Ridge, News South Wales, into an 11-acre NFT hydroponic facility that now employs more than 20 staff and produces between 60,000 and 85,000 bunches of Asian vegetables per week.

Nathan designed and built the operation, and is currently in the process of producing his own seedlings.

In addition to attending and presenting at domestic and international conferences, Nathan has attended field days, participated in the 2009 Brassica Think Tank in Adelaide, and is also a member of the Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce.

Angelo Lamattina

Angelo Lamattina is a third-generation grower who is a director and Manager Farm Operations of A & F Lamattina & Sons, in Boneo, Victoria.

With a workforce of 12, the business farms 115 acres producing parsnips, English and baby spinach, leeks, wild rocket and salad mix.

For the past 18 years, Angelo has developed skills and experience in not only farm operations but also the handling and direction of staff, both on-farm and in the packing and distribution facility.

Angelo has played a leading role in the development of the family business, furthering his knowledge with a vegetable-growing apprenticeship and by attending numerous training workshops.



Syngenta Researcher of the Year Award

Sponsored by Syngenta



The Syngenta Researcher of the Year Award acknowledges scientists with extensive portfolios in research and development (R&D), their dedication to promoting knowledge and understanding in the vegetable industry, and their contribution to the international status of Australian science. Short-listed finalists have a demonstrated track record of research or extension work that has contributed to long-term industry benefit.



Dr Nigel Crump

Plant Pathologist Dr Nigel Crump has a large and successful record of research projects. Integration of project outcomes by the grower community has been similarly successful. Nigel's track record is testament to his dogged determination to make a difference to the vegetable industry.

A passion for communicating the benefits of R&D in optimising crop performance is evident in the extensive papers Nigel has written, and the number of industry conferences, national and international tours, discussion groups, and expos in which he participates and initiates.

His extensive network of contacts across all levels of industry in Australia and overseas are indicative of his enthusiasm for his work and of his ambassadorship of Australian science globally.

Dr Paul Horne

Dr Paul Horne is an entomologist who has, the past 13 years, been owner and director of IPM Technologies Pty Ltd.

He has been involved with the development and implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) in a wide range of crops and has specialised in helping growers adopt IPM on-farm. He has conducted research on how to use biological control agents, cultural methods and selective pesticides, and has demonstrated best practice for IPM to growers and other interested parties.

Paul has written four books about insects and published more than 70 scientific and conference papers, as well as many other articles in industry literature. He is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at La Trobe University.



Dr Ian Porter

With more than 28 years experience working in the vegetable industry, Dr Ian Porter has received international recognition for his research on the development of novel IPM methods to control soilborne plant pathogens.

He and his team have conducted more than 25 research programs throughout the industry, have attracted over \$20 million of stakeholder funds, and, most importantly, their work has been widely adopted by industry, preventing huge losses to disease estimated at around \$40 million per year.

Ian's team's research on the phase out of methyl bromide earned the Australian vegetable industry huge international recognition, culminating in a prestigious international award in 2007 from the United States Environmental Protection Association (USEPA) for their efforts to decrease the use of this ozone-depleting substance.



AUSVEG Industry Recognition Award

Sponsored by AUSVEG Ltd



The AUSVEG Industry Recognition Award celebrates consistent individual contributions and commitment to the greater good of the industry, at a local, state or national level. Short-listed finalists are leaders in their respective fields and proactive in advancing the industry.



Peter Dal Santo

After graduating with an agricultural science degree in 1982, Peter Dal Santo began working in pest management for the agrichemical industry. Since 2000, Peter has worked primarily with vegetables, generating the necessary data for the industry to access new pesticides.

In 2004, his company, AgAware Consulting, expanded its role—it now coordinates pesticide access and pesticide management issues on behalf of most horticulture industries. Peter has a particular interest in substituting currently-available older pesticides, for newer, reduced-risk pesticides with sound integrated pest management (IPM) profiles and international market acceptance.

Peter, on behalf of the vegetable industry, is now working with AgAware's US counterpart, IR-4, to bring new pest management options to Australia sooner.

Graeme Smith

After nine years as a hydroponic vegetable grower in Victoria's Woodend, Graeme Smith opened Graeme Smith Consulting in 1998. The organisation offers crop-advisory services to more than 65 growers, and facilitated "Pathways to Production", a training package for protected-cropping growers Australia-wide, which led to the development of the Greenhouse Passport as accreditation for growers.

The consultancy conducted a national review of the protected cropping industry, it offers advice about due diligence studies into new and expanding industry projects, and has conducted climate and financial studies for two Victorian municipalities.

Graeme is Chairman of the Protected Cropping Working Group and a member of the Production Advisory Group. He is also President of the Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association.



Des Jennings

As a member of the Fresh Potatoes Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) for more than 10 years and of the Seed Potatoes Victoria Council, Des Jennings has acted as a link between growers and emerging technologies and ideas.

In addition to these roles, Des is Chairman of the Victorian Potato Growers Council and sits on the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Horticultural Council and the VFF Water Policy Council. He has also been a director of AUSVEG.

Des is dedicated to the reproduction of seed—particularly multiplying, grading and storing varieties for South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. He uses his many connections among growers, industry leaders, business and politicians for the benefit of the industry as a whole. **va**

IPM and market realities

How are IPM growing practices viewed along the supply chain? NSW DPI researcher Dr Sandra McDougall will head a panel discussion at the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference to find out.

One of the concerns that growers raise in regards to integrated pest management (IPM) adoption is market requirements. Markets generally require produce to be insect-free, although in times of undersupply these standards are often dropped.

Being an IPM grower does not necessarily mean your produce will have insects in it, just as using broad-spectrum insecticides does not guarantee insect-free produce. However, it is true that an IPM strategy tries to use 'ecosystem services' or the free pest-management of beneficial insects where possible; so an IPM paddock is more likely to have

increased insects numbers than one regularly sprayed with broad-spectrum insecticides.


Market-minded

Most of our major pests have the ability to develop insecticide resistance, including *Helicoverpa armigera*, western flower thrips, silverleaf whitefly, two-spotted mites, currant lettuce aphid. Growers who regularly use broad-spectrum insecticides may find that chemical controls are less successful when pests develop resistance to insecticides. This can lead to increased insect numbers in crops.

With an IPM strategy, insecticide use is a last resort; other management options are given priority. This means that insecticide resistance is generally not developed nor is it as devastating if it does occur. In the long-term, an IPM strategy is more likely to be effective than a chemical-only strategy.

The 'Market pull for IPM?' session, which is part of the Innovation and R&D showcase at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, will bring together representatives from different market sectors to voice their position on IPM and whether they see themselves as having a role in promoting or fostering

adoption. It is expected that wholesalers, retailers and growers will be represented at the session. There will also be an overview of some market-pull strategies from overseas.

For those who want to talk IPM specifics, workshop sessions will be held at the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee, from 7 to 8 May. 

 To attend the 'Market pull for IPM?' session, register at conference website, www.vegjieconf.com.au

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Cucurbit pest guide available soon

Need a ready reference for pests and diseases in cucurbit crops? Brea Acton discovers that a national ute guide is set to be launched at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference.

A new field identification guide specifically designed for cucurbits—the family of pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, gherkins, zucchinis and melons—will soon be made available to growers around the country.

The ute guide, launched at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, will be sent to all cucurbit National Vegetable Levy-paying growers to assist with fast identification of plant health problems currently affecting their cucurbit crops.

"It's a quick reference guide for growers to take into the field to help them identify pests and diseases," said Tony Napier, an

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A new national ute guide has been prepared to help cucurbit growers identify pests and diseases on-farm.
- The guide has been compiled by researchers and industry representatives Australia-wide to ensure that it retains a national focus.
- The guide will be distributed to cucurbit National Vegetable Levy-paying growers in May.

For more information contact:
i Tony Napier, Extension Officer,
 New South Wales Department of
 Primary Industries
 Email: <tony.napier@dpi.nsw.gov.au>
 Phone: 02 6951 2796
 or visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
 Project number: VG07015
 Keywords: Field identification
 or register to attend the 2009
 Australian Vegetable Industry
 Conference



Pests, Beneficials, Diseases and Disorders in Cucurbits: Field Identification Guide



Extension Officer at New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and project coordinator of the guide.

"For every problem identified in this book, there will be a dedicated page with photos, a description of the problem and some management information."

With the assistance of Technical Officer Valerie Draper, Tony has coordinated the collection of images and information, in consultation with researchers and extension officers in other major cucurbit growing regions.

This collaborative process means that the reference guide will be a resource for growers nationally, rather than being isolated to one area.

"Different regions have different spectrums of pests and diseases," said Tony. "We had to encompass all the different regions to make sure the book was suitable for right around Australia."

Comprehensive guide

Commencing mid-2007, the project came out of Horticulture

Australia Limited's (HAL) 2005 audit of priority areas in research and development investment for vegetable growers. Development of a field identification guide for pests and diseases affecting cucurbits was flagged as a high priority, and the team at the Yanco Agricultural Institute in New South Wales was commissioned to complete the project.

"The majority of the work was done here at Yanco. We had four DPI officers, pathologists and entomologists each working on a chapter. Then it was a matter of getting other state DPI experts to review the text, help identify the major and minor pests, and supply photos from their growing areas," said Tony.

"During the course of the project we also made contacts through the industry. As a result, other private agronomists and seed companies came on board to help with the text and provide more images."

Input from these other departments will ensure that the guide is as comprehensive and as specific to each region as possible.

"We really wanted to make sure we got an even feel across all states," Tony said.

Although pests and diseases vary between regions, there are some common problems affecting cucurbit growers nationally. Pumpkin beetle, thrips and aphids tend to be the most prolific pests, while mildews, wilts and mosaic viruses are the most prolific diseases.

The guide also includes useful information about a suite of beneficial insects so growers can distinguish between the helpful and harmful insects on their crops.

Keep it simple

Primarily concerned with assisting growers in the first stages of pest and disease identification, the Ute guide aims to be 'grower-friendly'.

"It's a first point of reference. It's not a textbook guide. There

toward a practical day-to-day usage.

"Growers will tend to chuck this book in the glove box of their ute and it might be exposed to a lot of moisture or heat, so it has to be robust," he said.

Distributed soon

After its launch, the reference guide will be sent to every levy-paying grower through HAL's network of Industry


Development Officers (IDOs).

Non-levy-paying cucurbit growers (such as watermelon and other melon growers) will also be able to purchase the guide through the New South Wales DPI bookstore.

Tony and the team at Yanco have had a good response from growers they have approached.

"All the feedback from growers has been positive. They like to see something tangible from their levy money that they can put in their hands and use. They're

looking forward to getting a copy," he said.

For now, it's a matter of waiting for the release of this useful guide, which will help cucurbit growers quickly and accurately identify on-farm plant health problems. 

“Different regions have different spectrums of pests and diseases. We had to make sure the book was suitable for growers nationally.”

will be some management text in there, such as the growth stages of the pest, feeding habits and a description of the pest, but we didn't want to get into integrated pest management (IPM), as it can get very complex and this is primarily an identification guide," said Tony.

Having a fast method of identification means growers will be able to work in conjunction with more detailed IPM strategies to eradicate pests and diseases from their crops.

The guide will also be a useful resource for growers for whom English is a second language.

"There are a lot of non-English speaking growers out there and they'll be able to look at the pictures and compare it with insects in their paddocks," Tony said.

Made from waterproof paper, the reference guide is geared

Devil in the detail



The common ladybird beetle [above] is a beneficial insect that causes no crop damage, while the cucurbit ladybird beetle [below left] and pumpkin beetle [below right] are both pests that damage crops. As these three insect look similar, the cucurbit ute guide will help growers quickly and accurately identify insect species. Images 1 & 2 supplied by NSW DPI, image 3 supplied by Peter Deuter, QDPI &F.



Vulnerable horticulture needs further investment in innovation

Key messages from the ABARE Outlook 2009 Conference include the vegetable industry's need to achieve productivity growth and develop its export markets. Economist Ian James summarises the presentations.

Last month the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) held its annual Outlook Conference. This is a showpiece conference for Australia's agriculture industries. Traditionally, the conference is opened by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, followed by an economic and commodity outlook.

ABARE does not provide forecasts for the vegetable or horticulture industries. This may be a blessing in disguise because other agriculture industries often decry the accuracy of these forecasts.

After the outlook has been presented, the conference splits into specialised streams and commodity group presentations, typically with three speakers: an ABARE staff member, an expert and a farmer with practical experience in the topic being covered.

The outlook

The US-based financial crisis has raised costs, reduced access to credit, increased uncertainty and destroyed wealth worldwide. It has sparked a global recession, unprecedented in its depth and scope—all major high-income countries are in recession. It has also led to a dramatic reduction in world trade.

Factors arguing for a prolonged global recession include the

synchronised nature of the economic downturn in all major economies, an investment overhang, the inability of some countries to stimulate their economy, the possibility of default on debt, and protectionist policies.

Factors arguing for a short downturn are strong action by government compared with The Great Depression of the 1930s, the massive cuts to automotive spending are not sustainable, the housing sector is close to the bottom, and the immediate impacts

of the credit crunch have passed through.

Despite this potential good news, the Australian economy will be weak in 2009 with economic growth hovering around zero and unemployment rising steeply. However, economic growth will resume in 2010.

Productivity growth

A major theme addressed in a number of conference sessions was productivity growth, which is the key to competitiveness and profitability in Australian

agriculture. Productivity growth is also needed to offset the adverse impacts on agriculture through the introduction of an emissions trading scheme (ETS).

Achieving productivity growth is increasingly difficult for Australian growers as climate change and the environment reduce access to scarce resources. To achieve higher productivity growth, Australia will require a renewed effort to engage in well-funded and strategically-focused research and development (R&D).

However, it appears that



Speakers from the "Horticulture: facing the challenges" panel: [from left] Tony Ford, McCain Foods; Judith Damiani, Citrus Australia; David de Paoli, Austchilli; and Brent Borrell, Centre for International Economics. Image supplied by ABARE Outlook 2009 conference, photo by Steve Keough Photography.

productivity growth and investment in R&D in agriculture is declining at precisely the time that the need is most urgent. Genetically modified plants could assist in achieving the level of productivity required.

Responding to global pressures

Tony Burke, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, addressed conference delegates, detailing Australian Government priorities for agriculture industries. Reports have been submitted for reform of drought policy and the quarantine system, and the government intends to act on these reports.

Productivity is the key to agriculture's response to these three great global pressures: the global recession, food security and climate change.

The government has made no decision as to whether agriculture will be included in an ETS from 2015. There is a disposition to include it but a final decision will not be made until 2013.

Sequestering of carbon in soil can make a big contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. An allocation of \$20 million has been made to finance nine projects that will research how to measure and analyse soil carbon. A further \$12 million has been allocated for a series of studies on nitrous oxide emissions from soils.

The soil carbon study is of direct relevance to vegetable growers with a case study of vegetable growing areas in Tasmania being funded.

Climate change and an ETS

Of all the developed countries, Australia is the most vulnerable and therefore has the greatest incentive to engage in climate change mitigation.

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate change because in Australia it operates close to the upper limits of temperature tolerance and close to the lower levels of water access. Rising temperatures, increased evaporation and changed rainfall patterns threaten agriculture.

An ETS is a hard sell as all the costs of its introduction are quantifiable but all the benefits are not.

“By placing an emphasis on productivity gains and innovation there is potential to increase industry profits by \$2.45 billion.”

Also, the costs come first and the benefits later. It's also important to note that the costs to Australia will be lower if conducted in a global context. There is little advantage in Australia taking unilateral action unless it pressures other countries to act.

Agriculture has huge potential for low-cost sequestering of carbon. This has the capacity to generate huge carbon credits and income for rural Australia, which can be offset against emissions. However, comprehensive carbon accounting and sequestering in the soil is difficult and should be the focus of a major research effort in Australia.

Horticulture to step up

Horticulture is facing major issues. These include:

- high labour costs (which account for 50 per cent of farm-gate prices), fuel, chemicals, and other inputs
- access to resources such as water, labour and land
- climate change and policy response
- increased imports from low

labour-cost markets

- a challenging domestic market with a range of consumer issues

- access to export markets.

It was noted that the world market for horticultural products is growing strongly. Australia's competitors are capturing this potential with other southern hemisphere exporters, exporting in excess of 50 per cent of

potential to increase industry profits by \$2.45 billion.

Innovation needs to be transformed and R&D rationalised with greater emphasis on larger projects, novel products, and sophisticated commercial and marketing platforms along the lines of the Vital Vegetables project.

An example of the success that can be had by this approach is provided by New Zealand. The Kiwis spent \$20 million on developing ZESPRI Gold (golden kiwi fruit) and \$50 million on market development. They are now spending \$20 million on kiwi fruit gene mapping to manipulate colour, shape and flavour, and to produce ZESPRI more quickly and cheaply. Sales for ZESPRI Gold of \$1 billion are expected this year; the unit price is around double that of green kiwi fruit.

production. Australia is not; its export intensity is less than 10 per cent.

Australia horticulture's production/yield growth has been slow due to a domestic market focus. Competitors appear to have achieved productivity growth of around twice that of Australia for the past 15 years. However, with many climatic regions and a good history in biological/agricultural science there is no fundamental reason why Australia cannot do better.

Changing focus

Future Focus is a whole of horticulture strategic plan that aims to increase the industry's profit and income.

Economic modelling for Future Focus forecasts that a business-as-usual case will generate an additional \$0.9 billion in industry profits by 2020, with increased domestic consumption of \$410 million, increased exports of \$102 million and productivity growth of \$381 million. By placing an emphasis on productivity gains and innovation there is

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The ABARE Outlook 2009 Conference, held in March, reported on the effects of the global depression, predicting that economic growth will resume in Australia in 2010.
- While the world market for horticultural products is growing strongly, Australia's competitors are capturing this potential. As Australia has many climatic regions and a good history in biological/agricultural science, there is great potential for it to do better.
- Future Focus, a whole of horticulture strategic plan, states that with an emphasis on productivity gains and innovation, projected industry profits of \$0.9 billion in 2020 can be increased by \$2.45 billion.

i To download papers and presentations from the ABARE Outlook 2009 Conference visit: www.abare.gov.au/outlook
Ian James will be presenting at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

Smart strategy beats cabbage-patch killer

Researchers are collaborating nationally to develop new ways to eradicate soilborne diseases from susceptible crops, writes Brea Acton.

S*clerotinia* has been identified as one of the most significant vegetable diseases in Australia. A soilborne fungus, *Sclerotinia* is estimated to cause between \$15 million and \$25 million in damage to Australian crops each year, through diseases such as lettuce drop and bean white mould.

A national research project, led by Dr Oscar Villalta, is underway to identify new and improved control measures to eradicate *Sclerotinia*.

"We are investigating a range of exciting new management options and disease-control approaches

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A project is underway to identify new and improved control measures to eradicate *Sclerotinia*, which is estimated to cause up to \$25 million damage to Australian crops annually.
- A three-pronged plan sees researchers optimising current IPM control measures, testing new IPM-compatible control measures and developing new applied technologies that kill soilborne pathogens.
- One finding is that biofuminant green manure crops have the ability to reduce disease carry-over in soil.

For further information contact:

i Dr Oscar Villalta, Senior Pathologist, Department of Primary Industries Victoria
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Email: <Oscar.Villalta@dpi.vic.gov.au>

or visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers

Project number: VG07126

Keywords: Soilborne pathogens or register to attend the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference



Sclerotinia rot of a cabbage head. [Inset] A Victorian cabbage crop, severely infected by *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*, which infects by aerial attack (ascospores). Images supplied by DPI Victoria.

as well as optimising conventional integrated pest management (IPM) options for on-farm use," said Oscar.

This project is part of a larger national vegetable pathology program, led by Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Victoria, to reduce soilborne diseases from Australian crops. Other members of the program include Dr Caroline Donald, who leads the research on root rot diseases, and Dr Ian Porter, head of the soilborne diseases program.

"Soilborne plant pathogens can significantly reduce yield and quality in a range of vegetable crops. These pathogens are difficult to control because they survive in

the soil for many years and each crop may be susceptible to several pathogens," said Ian.

Three-point plan

State government agencies, universities and private industry groups around Australia have been working together, pooling resources and tackling specific areas to devise new methods for controlling these pathogens.

"New management options must be economically sound, safe and inexpensive, and reduce diseases to acceptable levels," said Caroline.

Oscar has been working in collaboration with researchers from the University of Tasmania,

Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPI&F), and Peracto to improve management of *Sclerotinia*.

Grower workshops conducted early in the stages of the project revealed that growers may not be applying protective measures in the right way or using the correct method of crop rotation to prevent the build up of *Sclerotinia*.

Oscar said that the team's first priority was working to optimise current IPM control measures, so that the processes and tools growers are using now can be made even more effective.

"We also have a range of new IPM-compatible control measures we are testing. For example,

Ask the industry

Phil Hoult, Technical Services Lead for Syngenta Crop Protection, responds to questions, concerns or problems you have about protecting your crops.

What is duty of care when using agricultural chemicals?

Consumers are increasingly demanding that Australian growers provide assurances about the integrity of the produce they supply. Residue detection in produce from an illegal or off-label use of an agricultural chemical can result in growers having produce rejected from markets, suffering price penalties or, in some cases, losing crucial supply contracts with major chains.

A person who uses an agricultural chemical has a duty of care to ensure products are used correctly so as to not cause harm to the health of the public, animals, the environment, or local or export trade. Advisors too, who provide information about the use of agricultural chemicals, may also be liable for any adverse consequences that result if negligence is proven.

Withhold as directed

The withholding period (WHP), found on product labels, tells growers of the time period that must be allowed between the final application of a chemical and the harvest of the crop.

The WHP refers to “the time period that is set at registration for a chemical, to guide users of the chemical as to when residues will be below the MRL. It is based on the rate at which the chemical breaks down on the crop/or animal”. The time taken for chemicals to break down will vary.

Mind the limit

Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) represent important science-based standards for trading agricultural produce within and between countries. The MRL “is the highest concentration of a residue of a particular chemical that is legally permitted or accepted in food or animal feed”.

For a company to develop a new active ingredient or product label, and register that product for use, a range of comprehensive residue trials are conducted under Australian growing conditions.

If a crop protection product is used to control pests and

diseases, the application rate is listed on the label, along with other directions such as the WHP and recommended spray interval. By following label directions relating to these factors, the product should not cause residues in food or produce that will exceed the MRL.

The MRL is a clear standard to confirm that a crop protection product has been used in-line with label instructions. If an MRL is exceeded, it usually indicates a misuse of that particular chemical, however, this is not a direct indication of a public health or safety concern. **va**

“A person who uses an agricultural chemical has a duty of care to ensure products are used correctly.”

i If you have a question to ask the industry, email <editor@ausveg.com.au> or ring the Syngenta Technical Product Advice Line on 1800 067 108. Some questions may be published.

biofumigant green manure crops have the ability to reduce disease carry-over in the soil,” he said.

“The third component we are developing is new applied technologies that are soft on the environment, to kill pathogens in the soil and protect plants against infection.”

Working it out

A national workshop held in Tasmania in November 2007 brought together expert plant pathologists, representatives from the major chemical companies and local bean-processing companies affected by *Sclerotinia*. Before attending the workshops, interstate pathologists contacted

local growers to find out what the most important issues were for them.

Oscar and Caroline also consulted growers through a number of workshops across the country.

“Biofumigant green manure crops have the ability to reduce disease carry-over in soil.”

“The aim of the growers’ workshops was to get feedback, to find out what level of crop losses growers were experiencing, what control practices they were implementing, and why the control

measures were failing, so we could design better control programs,” said Oscar.


Recommendations from this project will be delivered to growers through publications and

another round of workshops later in the year.

“The major benefit for growers will be to improve control and therefore increase yields and profitability,” said Oscar.

Another benefit will be to provide growers with a set of best management practices so that they can select an approach suitable for their particular cropping system.

“By the end of the project we will be able to deliver strategies that growers can use immediately, such as better fungicide control, new fungicides, and a set of new green manure crops to use with susceptible crops to break the cycle of disease build-up,” he said.

Findings of this project will be communicated to delegates of the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference at the R&D showcase. 

Wilting away

While fusarium wilt is devastating snow pea crops around the country, the major hurdle for controlling this disease is cost, discovers Graham Gosper.

Rapid development of alternative strategies to stem the spread of fusarium wilt disease in snow pea crops will be critical to the future survival of the industry in Australia.

New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Plant Pathologist Andrew Watson said that was the key message to emerge from an exhaustive study into the impact of the disease on the industry.

The project revealed fusarium wilt is much more widespread

throughout Australia's major snow pea growing regions than previously believed, regularly devastating crops in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Researchers also found that, of the limited control measures available, the most effective were too expensive for most growers to consider.

Stop the spread

Fusarium wilt is caused by a fungus that can survive in soil for years. It may express symptoms

in two forms: by the sudden death of young plants or the slow yellowing of more mature plants, usually when pods are formed. The disease can be spread through infected soil or plant material, or it may be introduced via plant debris with seed.

"The development of resistant varieties is recognised as the ideal method of control but at this stage that is not considered viable for growers or the seed industry in Australia," said Andrew. The cost of this process makes it



Internal browning of snow peas is typical of fusarium wilt. Image supplied by Andrew Watson.

unviable for an industry of this size.

“Soil fumigation has also been found to provide good control but it too is costly, and it raises environmental issues.”

Despite the challenges, Andrew said the research project has yielded valuable insights that will assist industry efforts to better manage the threat.

“It has given us a much better understanding of the disease, the forms it takes, and how it behaves in Australia,” he said.

“For the first time we have a clear picture of the extent of infestation in the main growing regions and we know much more about how it is spread. A comprehensive testing program has identified which of the most common races, or forms, of the disease occur in each of the growing regions.”

Overseas disease?

The project, which began in December 2005, is a collaboration involving New South Wales DPI, the University of Sydney, Botanic Gardens Trust in Sydney and Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F).

Andrew coordinated the program, which has involved extensive disease surveys, the collection and testing of hundreds of plant and soil samples from throughout growing areas in three states, seed dressing and variety trials, genetic studies and DNA testing.

The testing program, which included extensive race typing experiments carried out over 12 months, was conducted by University of Sydney Plant Pathologist Ameera Yousiph. These experiments involved the infection of snow peas with more than 400 isolates of the fungus collected during surveys of the major growing areas.

Andrew said the race experiments confirmed that the most common form of the disease in Australia is the same as that which predominates in the United States. “With most of our snow pea seed sourced from the US, that could indicate some disease



“Reducing plant stress and improving farm hygiene are two of the simplest means of reducing the spread of the fungus.”

is being brought in with seed but we have no other evidence to support that theory,” he said.

Stress less

The project team is still working on guidelines for the development of better management practices to combat the disease.

“Among other things, they will emphasise the need to reduce plant stress and improve farm hygiene as two of the simplest means of reducing the spread of the fungus,” Andrew said.

“The research findings clearly show plants stressed through lack of moisture are much more susceptible to the disease in warm conditions. It is also clear that infections can easily be spread between blocks and between farms by planting equipment that has not been properly cleaned.”

Andrew said other guidelines will be developed and field trials of resistant varieties and reduction techniques need to be completed before the project concluded in September this year.


He said further research is needed to develop alternative strategies for better management of the disease, and that this

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Fusarium wilt, found in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, is much more widespread throughout Australia's major snow pea growing regions than previously believed.
- Cost is a major deterrent to the development of alternative management strategies, including resistant varieties or soil fumigation.
- However, reducing plant stress and improving farm hygiene are two simple ways to limit the spread of the fungus.

i For more information contact:
Andrew Watson, Plant Pathologist, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
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Email: <andrew.watson@dpi.nsw.gov.au>
or visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
Project number: VG05029
Keywords: Fusarium wilt
or register to attend the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

should be a priority for industry.

Findings of this project will be communicated to delegates of the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference at the R&D showcase. 



Malaise traps are placed across insect flight paths to intercept and collect insects. The traps indicate from which direction insects have come, and this data is used to ascertain whether pests are moving from vegetation into crops or vice versa. Images supplied by CSIRO.

Living on the edge

Revegetation by design aims to reduce chemical usage by establishing beneficial-attracting remnant vegetation around crops, writes Louise Lawrence from CSIRO Entomology.

Most vegetable growers in south-east Queensland's Lockyer Valley are interested in the concept of using native vegetation for pest management, regardless of whether they already have native vegetation on their farms. This was one finding of research into the use of 'revegetation by design' conducted by Bronwyn Walsh and Samantha Hermitage from Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPI&F), and Dr Nancy Schellhorn from CSIRO Entomology. It was also found that most growers value native vegetation for a range of other benefits including erosion prevention and

windbreaks.

Revegetation by design uses native vegetation in vegetable-production systems. Its emphasis is on replacing weeds that could harbour pests and diseases with species of native plants that do not, and providing incentives for growers to maintain existing remnant vegetation.

Native plants encourage beneficials

While growers are generally positive about native vegetation on their farms and the ecosystem services it can provide—such as habitat for pollinators and natural enemies of pests, biodiversity and

carbon sequestration—they can also see the drawbacks. Native vegetation uses both water and arable land. Growers need to see the revegetation by design process in action and have guidelines to help them implement it.

An increase in pests, planned changes to land-management legislation around water courses, and continued urban encroachment mean that growers are pressured on several fronts. Additionally, consumers are more conscious of the environmental sustainability of the food they eat. Therefore, growers need an integrated approach to vegetable production and land management. Integrated pest

management (IPM) packages that reduce the use of pesticides are an essential tool in this endeavour and revegetation by design is an important component of IPM.

Growers are increasingly aware that non-crop habitat in agricultural landscapes may play a crucial role in solving pest problems. Earlier studies showed that beneficial predators and parasitoids were found on a range of native vegetation, with several species spending considerable time in the edge habitat between native remnant vegetation and crops.

Recent research has built on these earlier findings to help answer growers' concerns, including:

- how will maintaining or creating areas of native vegetation benefit them?
- will it add to their pest problems?

As well as a grower survey, the project included field trials in two different landscapes and a literature search to identify when native vegetation may pose a risk to vegetable crops.

The right direction

The field trials looked at whether beneficial insects and pests move from remnant vegetation, including riparian (river/creek bank) remnants, into the crop. Of the two farm landscapes used, one had less than one per cent remnant vegetation, while the other had more than 60 per cent.

The results showed that many beneficial insect species were found in remnant vegetation. More importantly, there was greater movement of beneficials from the riparian remnant into the crop than from the crop into the remnant. This trend showed in both landscapes, but it was significant only in the site with the high percentage of remnant vegetation.

Some beneficials, such as robber flies, preferred the edge habitat between non-riparian remnant vegetation and the crops. This suggested that a range of habitat types may result in greater diversity of insect



“A range of habitat types may result in greater diversity of insect predators and more potential for pest control.”

predators and more potential for pest control.

However, some pest species were also found in the remnant vegetation and moved from it into crops. This was particularly true for sap-sucking jassids that used the exotic weed grasses found around field and remnant edges; it highlighted the importance of selecting the right native plant species for revegetation.

Info online soon

A literature search was conducted to identify when native vegetation may pose a risk to vegetable crops. It showed that of the 110 pest species for vegetables, fewer than 20 were seen as difficult to control. There were 37 native plant families that were considered low-risk for pest management in vegetables, which may result in increased options for use in revegetation by design. This information will be available from the CSIRO website in late-2009.

While the evidence from this work supports the use of revegetation by design in IPM

packages, there are outstanding issues that need to be resolved to address grower concerns more fully. These include:

- determining how long it takes beneficial insects to respond to pests in cropping systems near remnant vegetation
- determining the scale of changes in vegetation management needed to delay invasion of crops by pests
- creating decision-support tools to help growers adopt information about native plants that are low-risk for their production system
- capturing additional benefits such as drought and fire tolerance in native plants
- communicating with growers and extension officers to help growers adopt the findings.

Findings of this project will be communicated to delegates of the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference at the R&D showcase. The project researchers thank the Emericks and Andrew Johannson of Mulgowie Farms for their assistance with this study. 🌱

THE BOTTOM LINE

- 'Revegetation by design' replaces weeds with native vegetation to decrease pest populations, and increase the number of beneficial insects.
- Many beneficial insect species were found in remnant vegetation, and there was greater movement of beneficials from the remnant into the crop than from the crop into the remnant.
- A list of 37 native plant families that were considered low-risk for pest management in vegetables will be available online later this year.

i For more information contact:
 Dr Nancy Schellhorn, CSIRO Entomology
 Phone: 07 3214 2721
 Email: <nancy.schellhorn@csiro.au>
 or visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers
 Project number: VG06024
 Keywords: Native vegetation or register to attend the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

AUSVEG CEO Message

Although it's only been one month since my last message, a great deal has happened in the vegetable and potato industries. Two new directors have been elected to the AUSVEG board—Paul Bogdanich replaces Jim Trandos as the representative for Western Australia, and Mark Napper joins the team as a skills-based director. I'd like to welcome Paul and Mark, and thank Jim for his diligence and assistance over his time as a director these past two and a half years.

The Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and advisory groups met in Sydney in March to discuss the investment plan for the National Vegetable Levy in 2009/2010. Recommendations will be made to the HAL board before the plan is approved and announced.

In big news for growers, the long-awaited tender document for the Vegetable Industry Development Program has been released.

Tenders were to be lodged with HAL by 27 April 2009. This wide-ranging program has six integrated components: Program Coordination; Knowledge Management; People Development; Consumers and Markets; Local Information and Farm Productivity; and Economics. It will have a lasting effect on how levy-funded activities and outcomes are communicated and implemented.

I was fortunate enough to attend the 2009 World Potato Congress in Christchurch, New Zealand, along with several AUSVEG staff members. This fantastic event featured presentations about R&D and marketing programs around the world, and was a great opportunity to meet with growers and industry representatives from all over the globe.

Hot on its heels comes the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, which is only days away. Finishing touches have been made to the speaker

program and the Innovation and R&D Showcase, and it promises to be an informative and engaging event for all who attend—as well as a chance to meet the new AUSVEG board.

For growers who would like to know how the National Vegetable Levy was invested in 2007/08, the Annual Levy Payers meeting will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre on Day One of the conference. See below for more information.

As always, if you have any questions or would like more information about upcoming AUSVEG initiatives, please don't hesitate to contact me at <robert.lawler@ausveg.com.au> or on 03 9544 8098.



Robert Lawler
Acting CEO
AUSVEG Ltd

Want to know how your levy was invested for 2007/08?

Or simply have some questions you would like to ask?

Join AUSVEG and HAL at the Annual Levy Payers Meeting in Melbourne.

Where: Bellarine 2 meeting room, Melbourne Convention Centre

When: Monday 4 May (Day One of the Australian Vegetable Industry Conference)

4.00-4.30 pm: Fresh potato growers

4.30-5.00 pm: Processed potato growers

5.00-6.00 pm: Vegetable growers

Followed by the welcome cocktail reception for the conference.

For more information contact AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098.

AROUND THE STATES

Queensland



Growcom is pleased with the progress the horticulture industry is making toward meeting the Australian Government's water quality targets under the Reef Rescue program.

Already, 10 per cent of the growing sector in reef catchments has completed a water quality risk assessment, which is the first step in managing any issues.

While horticulture is a modest contributor to reef water quality issues, the enthusiasm for the Reef Rescue program demonstrated by the sector indicates that horticulture will make a good contribution, provided funding levels are maintained.

Growcom has been pleased with the enthusiasm of growers to improve their farm management practices and believes that the high uptake shows that the industry is serious about reef water quality.

In the past six months, horticulture growers have been encouraged to apply for government funding for on-farm projects that will capture water run-off or improve the quality of water that leaves properties and enters waterways feeding into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

To apply for this funding, growers needed to undertake a water quality risk assessment on-farm. Through this process, potential on-farm water quality risks were identified for improvement. Growers then applied for funding setting out the details of their water quality project with the help of the local officer. The projects are currently being assessed by local Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups in the various

catchment regions.

Growcom has been the key delivery agent throughout the reef catchments, in partnership with the local NRM groups.

So far, 166 growers have undertaken the water quality risk assessment module, including a number of potato growers on the Atherton Tablelands. This includes 153 in reef catchments, which represents 10 per cent of targeted growers.

Additionally, 38 growers have completed the Water Use Efficiency module to identify where improvements can be made in on-farm water use efficiency and 34 have completed the soil health module to identify where improvements can be made to soil health.

This is a significant achievement in just six months and means that overall targets, in terms of total number of growers reaching practice-change targets at the end of five years, are realistic and achievable.

Mark Panitz

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Victoria



Victoria's vegetable industry is setting its future direction with a new plan that will see it:

- lead and respond
- direct consumer trends that favour industry
- develop responses to emerging trends
- inform and lead retailers.

These are some of the key

initiatives to evolve from a recent industry workshop that was attended by growers, supply chain representatives and staff from the Department of Primary Industries Victoria. Together they discussed the development of a Victorian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan.

The group was guided by a Steering Committee, headed by VGA President, Luis Gazzola.

A draft plan is currently under review by the working committee, with a timetable to launch the plan at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference.

Keep current

Growers are encouraged to use the VGA Victoria website to remain up to date with industry information.

The monthly *Vegetable Growers Notes* is now a regular communication with Victorian vegetable growers and industry associates.

Gala dinner postponed

A recent meeting of the VGA Executive Committee passed a resolution to postpone the forthcoming Vegetable Growers Gala Night at Crown, which was planned for Saturday 1 August 2009. This was due to the impact of recent climatic events affecting our members in Victoria, the financial downturn and the lack of sponsorship that has resulted in the event not being adequately funded.

It is with regret that the event is postponed.

In addition to the 2009 conference in Melbourne and the National Vegetable Expo in Werribee, here are two events that may be of interest to growers:

7 August 2009—Vegetable Growers Annual Golf Day at Lang Lang Golf Club, South Gippsland Highway, Nyora.

9 October 2009—VGA Victoria Annual General Meeting at Crowne Plaza, Spencer Street,

Melbourne, at 4 pm.

Tony Imeson

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2009

4-6 May

Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2009

Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne, Vic

For more information:

Website: www.vegieconf.com.au

Phone: AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098



6 May

Australian Vegetable Industry Awards 2009 and conference gala dinner

Crown Palladium, Melbourne, Vic

For more information:

Website: www.vegetableindustryawards.com.au

Phone: Alisha Johnson, AUSVEG, 03 9544 8098



7-8 May

National Vegetable Expo

Werribee, Vic

For more information:

Contact Claire Luppino

Email: scluppino@optusnet.com.au

Phone: 0427 335 518

24-26 May

Future Focus & Produce Marketing Association (PMA) 2009 Fresh Connections Conference

Hilton Hotel, Sydney, NSW

For more information about Future Focus:

Website: www.horticulture.com.au

Phone: 02 8295 2300

For more information about PMA 2009 Fresh Connections:

Contact John Baker

Email: john@producemarketing.com.au

Phone: 02 9744 6366

June 2009

22-23 June

National Farmers' Federation 1st National Congress and 2009 Innovation in Agriculture Awards

Brisbane Convention Centre, Brisbane, Qld

For more information:

Website: www.congress.nff.org.au

July 2009

19-22 July

National Industry Conference of the Australian Hydroponic & Greenhouse Association

Sydney Homebush Showgrounds, Sydney, NSW

For more information:

Website: www.ahga.org.au

Email: administrator@ahga.org.au

Phone: 02 9939 5993

September 2009

2-4 September

Asiafruit Congress & Asia Fruit Logistica

Hong Kong

For more information:

Website: www.asiafruitcongress.com

Email: info@asiafruitcongress.com

10-11 September

13th Symposium on Precision Agriculture in Australasia

The University of New England, Armadale, NSW

For more information:

Contact David Lamb

Phone: 02 6773 3565

Email: parg@une.edu.au

October 2009

2-5 October

Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit Convention and Exposition

Anaheim, California, USA

For more information:

Website: www.pma.com

14-16 October

Southern Hemisphere Congress

Cape Town, South Africa

For more information:

Website: www.shcongress.com

November 2009

9-11 November

Eurofruit Middle East Congress

Dubai, UAE

For more information:

Website: www.mideastcongress.com



A picture of health.



With the launch of two innovative new products, Bayer CropScience offers vegetable growers the potential to grow even healthier, higher value produce.

As an innovator to the horticultural industry, you can always expect Bayer CropScience to lead the way with products to help improve outcomes and enhance the quality of your crops. This year, Bayer is launching two exciting new products to add to our already extensive range. To find out more about how your crops can benefit, visit our stand at the Vegetable Industry Conference at the Melbourne Convention Centre, 4 – 6 May 2009.





DEMAND MORE VISIBILITY

Now is the time to see your Case IH dealer about productivity-enhancing equipment for your vegetable cropping business. Case IH's new VISION-LIFT loaders enclose the hydraulics and wiring to give you greater visibility, safety and ease of operation. Your Case IH dealer can offer excellent value on new Case IH tractors and VISION-LIFT loaders to make more profit this season. **CASE IH. FOR THOSE WHO DEMAND MORE.**

