

vegetables

australia

5.5 | Mar/Apr 2010

The not so ordinary
Dr Melina Parker

AUSVEG National Convention
Anticipation building

New IAC Chair
Mr Peter Deuter

Export industry saved
Green light given to Australian exports

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vegetables australia

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Cover image:

Tasmanian grower
Dr Melina Parker at her farm
in Don, Tasmania.

Photography by
Mark Seaton.



A word from the AUSVEG Chairman

It is with great enthusiasm that I congratulate and welcome the new members appointed to the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), including Mr Peter Deuter to the position of independent chair.

Mr Peter Deuter was an outstanding candidate, with significant experience in research and development in the public sector, and leadership expertise in co-ordinating national projects. The vegetable industry is privileged to have such an experienced and enthusiastic IAC chair.

A decision regarding the composition of the IAC was made by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) after a lengthy application process which included many high calibre applicants. AUSVEG was responsible for making

recommendations to HAL and ensuring that the applicants recommended had the required skills to serve on the committee.

The collective expertise of the new committee members includes those who've had extensive experience in reading and reviewing R&D project proposals and undertaking research, as well as in business management, science and trade in vegetables.

The quality of the new committee members will serve to enhance the work of the IAC and represents an excellent combination of intellectual strength and tertiary qualifications as well as grower and local network knowledge.

The National Vegetable Levy is used to fund R&D conducted by a range of service providers, including research agencies, tertiary institutions and industry

bodies.

The new IAC and Advisory Group members will help to ensure investment decisions regarding R&D remain relevant to current industry priorities.

With assistance from Advisory Groups and Working Groups, the IAC has the significant task of understanding how to apply the vegetable industry's strategic plan and to ensure that recommendations to HAL regarding R&D are directed fairly and appropriately across the industry.

The new IACs will hold its first meeting in March in which the future focus of R&D funding will be discussed and prioritised.

I would also like to thank the outgoing members whose dedication and commitment have been an invaluable asset to the industry for many years.



John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG

AUSVEG CEO Message

Rising input costs continue to represent a major challenge for the vegetable industry and surveys have shown that the majority of growers perceive rising farm input costs to be one of the greatest obstacles to the future viability of the industry.

Our growers are increasingly competing with imports from international competitors such as China and New Zealand.

The influence imports have on domestic markets is significant. The availability of imports can lead to reduced on-farm sale prices which directly affects Australian growers.

The *Australian* newspaper reported recently that Chinese imports of fruit and vegetables had grown from \$46.3 million in 2004-05 to \$110 million in 2008-09. This figure reflects a startling trend. Over the last decade, Australia's export to import ratio for vegetables has practically reversed.

AUSVEG has expressed its concern that recently reported falls in on-farm vegetable sale

prices and lower yields reflect increasing pressure from import markets and rising costs across the industry.

The recent strength of the Australian dollar has also placed added pressure on growers, as Australian companies look to source cheaper produce from abroad.

Pressures such as those from import markets and rising costs place further strain on rural farming families who are also struggling to come to grips with the effects of climate variability.

It is imperative that the industry continues to work towards achieving higher productivity growth and that we support local producers by informing consumers about the benefits and quality of Australian grown products. All of this, of course, may not be enough and we need to also explore other options in this battle.

In other news, the new Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has recently

been announced, following an extensive interview process that included candidates from every state in Australia.

Preparations are also continuing for the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence, to be held at Conrad Jupiters Hotel Casino on the Gold Coast from May 27-30.

The AUSVEG National Convention will be the landmark event for the vegetable industry this year. An informative speaker program will feature alongside a trade show, a strong social program, kid's program and the 2010 AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence.

I encourage all growers to contact AUSVEG on (03) 9544 8098 or convention@ausveg.com.au, or to visit the convention webpage at www.ausveg.com.au/convention, so you can register to attend this exciting and significant industry event.



Richard Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG



Pg 26 Dr Melina Parker: The not so ordinary grower



Pg 16 AUSVEG 2010 National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence takes shape



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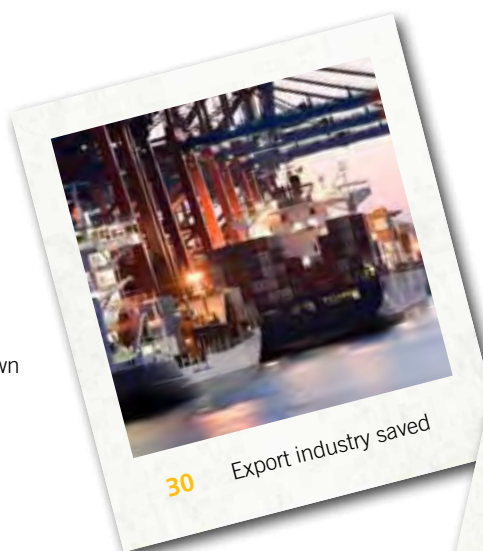
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Fruit Logistica Trade Fair highlight of tour

The 2010 Fruit Logistica Berlin Trade Fair has been hailed as the highlight by members on last month's grower tour of Israel, Germany and Spain.

While growers visited farms in southern Israel, and gained insights into high tech farming operations in Spain, the benefits from attending the world renowned trade fair in Berlin was considered the most valuable part of the tour.

Fruit Logistica, which took place from February 3-5, is considered the most important business and communication arena for international fresh produce, with key decision makers, international leaders in agribusiness, supply chain representatives and government officials from more than 120 countries in attendance.

The event allowed growers to meet and network with other

members of the international growing community and explore a staggering 2000 exhibitions from around the world.

Luis Gazzola, President of the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria, participated in the tour and said the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair was the highlight of the trip.

"The trade fair was a fantastic opportunity to see how growers in other countries are doing things," Mr Gazzola said.

"Some of their practices and techniques are unbelievable and to get the chance to communicate and network with people from all over the world was a great opportunity."

"Every grower would benefit

“The chance to communicate and network with people from all over the world was incredible.”

from attending such a conference; it was a great eye opener to see how vegetables are being grown in other countries.”

Fellow tour member, Richard Gorman, also hailed the trade fair, describing it as a valuable insight into the professionalism of growers in other parts of the world.

"I was able to learn about new packaging techniques which will lead to reduced labour costs through better use of technology," Mr Gorman said.

AUSVEG Chairman John Brent was also in attendance to represent the industry at the crucial event. 



President of the Vegetable Growers' Association of Victoria Luis Gazzola on the recent grower tour to Israel, Spain and Germany.



On the front foot with fruit fly

Industry leaders come together to discuss solving the nation's fruit fly problem

AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy has hailed a recent conference held to discuss the treatment of fruit fly, as an important step in finding a solution to one of Australia's most destructive pests.

Held in Melbourne in January, the meeting was chaired by AgAware consultant Peter Dal Santo and attended by members of all state bodies, HAL and AUSVEG representatives, and other key stakeholders who are affected by the issue.

The conference was convened by AUSVEG, with support from the Vegetables IAC, in the wake of the recent outbreak of Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) in Mildura and with debate continuing over the future plans of the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) in regards to chemical treatment of the pest. Growcom also asked AUSVEG to play a national role in addressing the important issue.

The objective of the conference was to bring together representatives from across the industry and importantly

members from each of the state bodies, to gauge present concerns and to explore possible solutions to the problem.

While QFF is endemic to many regions of Queensland, the pest is of great concern to growers right across Australia.

As a consequence of Australia's unique growing conditions, fruit flies are a constant threat to all states and require strict domestic quarantine zones.

January's outbreak in Mildura resulted in the implementation of a 15 kilometer suspension zone requiring all varieties of fruit and vegetables which are considered potential hosts of the QFF to be checked prior to leaving the area.

Participants heard from researcher Kevin Bodnaruk from AKC Consultants, who presented the results of a continuing study into the effect on with-holding periods for different commodities based on the rulings expected from the APVMA. The project centres on the affect on fruit and vegetables using lower dosages

of chemicals and the consequence of pre or post harvest treatment. Mr Bodnaruk also requested feedback on what industry considers viable with-holding periods which may be affected in the near future.

Possible Solutions

Peter Leach, a Senior Entomologist with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), also addressed the meeting and discussed research into possible alternatives to current treatment techniques.

Denise Kreyborg, Industry Development Officer for the Bowen District Growing Association (BDGA) led discussion on one such alternative which is already successfully operating and eliminating fruit flies in the Bowen region. The technique, known as a 'systems approach', involves a combination of chemicals sprayed at particular times, incorporating Integrated Pest Management into a systematic method for eradicating pests.

Mr Mulcahy reiterated the importance of tackling the problem with a national outlook, assuring growers that AUSVEG, Growcom and HAL will be working closely with other state bodies, strategic partners and research groups to find a solution to the issue.

"The fruit fly issue is a significant problem within the vegetable industry. We are determined to work with stakeholders to achieve the best outcome for growers and secure their long term survival," he said.

The conference was facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG, it was funded by the National vegetable levy and matched funds from the Australian Government. **va**

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New Vegetable IAC

After an extensive interview process, the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has been announced with many new faces joining the ranks.

AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy, has welcomed the appointment of all members of the new Vegetable IAC including Mr Peter Deuter, as the Independent Chair.

The Vegetable IAC is a committee which advises the Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) board and makes recommendations to HAL about how research and development (R&D) levy funds should be invested to best meet the needs of the vegetable industry.

Mr Deuter who currently holds the position of Senior Principal Horticulturist at the Gatton Research Station in Queensland with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), was appointed to the position of vegetable IAC chair by HAL after a formal recommendation was made by AUSVEG.

Mr Mulcahy, said the appointment of Mr Deuter was a positive move for the industry, which will benefit from his extensive experience in key senior horticultural posts.

"Mr Deuter brings a breadth of experience and enthusiasm to this role and I am confident his appointment will produce positive benefits for the vegetable industry," Mr Mulcahy said.

"Mr Deuter's mix of horticultural and research and development experience in the public sector, together with his leadership expertise in co-ordinating significant national projects, makes him an ideal candidate for this role and he

will prove to be an invaluable asset for the industry," Mr Mulcahy said.

Mr Deuter has previously been involved with a number of important R&D projects funded by the horticulture industry and he is well qualified for the role, with a Master of Agricultural Studies and a Bachelor of Applied Science from the University of Queensland.

The Vegetable IAC meets regularly to recommend how levy funds should be distributed in order to maximise industry benefit in accordance with the industry's broader strategic imperatives.

Levies are collected by the Levies Revenue Service (LRS) and matched funds are provided by the Australian Government through HAL to support investment in R&D activities that benefit the Australian vegetable industry and the broader community.

The new Vegetable IAC will include:

- Independent chair
- Mr Peter Deuter (QLD)
- Mr Roger Turner (VIC)
- Dr Melina Parker (TAS)
- Mr Danny De Ieso (SA)
- Ms Denise Ellement (WA)
- Mr Peter Ward (NSW)
- Mr Kent West (QLD)

Mr Mulcahy also praised the outgoing chair, Mr David De Paoli, for his valuable service to the industry over many years.

Briefly

Aussie giants listed in world's top 30 retail companies

Australia's two largest supermarket operators, Woolworths and Wesfarmers, have been listed in the world's top 30 retail companies, according to the Deloitte Global Powers of Retailing 2010 report. The report, which identifies the 250 largest retailers by revenue for the 2008/2009 financial year lists Woolworths in 26th position and Wesfarmers in 28th position.

Both Australian retailers are in third and fourth places respectively in the Asia-Pacific top ten - which was dominated by Japanese retailers. [va](#)

Tasmania on Japanese company's radar

A leading Japanese company is looking at the prospect of buying Tasmanian vegetables and fish and may even set up a vegetable processing plant in the Apple Isle. Late last year McCain Foods said they would be shutting down their Tasmanian vegetable processing plant in November 2010, a move that would leave a significant void in the market. And, while it is early days in negotiations, Primary Industries Minister David Llewellyn has said there is interest from a major Japanese food firm in filling that void.

"They need to explore the possibilities," Mr Llewellyn told the ABC. "I've outlined to them the benefits and opportunities that now exist in Tasmania and I think that they're prepared to look at those issues and take them on board and see what's possible." Mr Llewellyn did not name the company but noted that McCain's departure would present a great opportunity for new players to enter the market. [va](#)

Extreme Growing

A snap shot into the future for vegetable growers may have come from an unlikely source. Vietnamese student Nguyen Thi Trang Nha, a young engineer from central Dat Lat City, has successfully developed a plant variety which can grow both tomatoes and potatoes.

Nha grafted the top of a tomato plant onto the foot of a potato plant and the resulting species proved capable of producing both types of produce. Planting the tomato-potato breed is also more efficient as growers can produce more vegetables in a small area, said Nha.

In addition, tomatoes and potatoes would no longer have to be planted separately, saving time and taking advantage of limited land. [va](#)

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Premier Kristine Keneally
visits 2009 AUVEG
young grower of the year
Nathan Clackson



Research boost for Central Coast

A new \$5.9 million state-of-the-art farming research centre will be built on the Central Coast, after an announcement from New South Wales Premier Kristine Keneally in February.

2009 AUSVEG Young grower of the year Nathan Clackson, had a welcome visitor to his 11 acre Asian hydroponics farm at Peats Ridge on the Central Coast, when the NSW Premier visited last month to make the announcement.

The area produces a large proportion of the nation's Asian vegetables, along with numerous varieties of stone fruit. Mr Clackson's farm is one of the biggest hydroponics farms in Australia, operating under the banner of Barden Produce.

It is hoped NSW fruit and vegetables will be sold to new international markets with the help of the research centre. It is scheduled for completion by December this year and is said

to be at the cutting edge of horticultural research.

Funded by the NSW Government – the new Industry & Investment NSW research facility located at the University of Newcastle's Central Coast campus – will help farmers across NSW produce clean, green crops that reduce the use of pesticides.

According to the Premier it will also help local producers export their goods to new markets in Asia and beyond.

"This will help farmers establish long-term and lucrative markets in Asia and other overseas markets," Ms Keneally said.

Ms Keneally said the new facility will help gain market

access for NSW produce, building on the successes of the government's existing programme, the Primary Industries Institute in Gosford, which paved the way for the re-opening of Australian trade with Taiwan for stone fruit and cherries, estimated to be worth \$30 million.

Premier Keneally, Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan, and Member for The Entrance, Grant McBride, made the announcement while visiting Mr Clackson's farm to catch a glimpse of the area's horticultural industry in practice.

Mr Clackson has worked with Industry & Investment NSW researchers on finding ways to extend the shelf life of Asian vegetables so that they can be

transported longer distances.

"It's great to see the government support our industry with such a centre and a privilege to have the Premier visit my farm," Mr Clackson said.

Ms Keneally said that the research facility will be amongst the finest in the Australian horticulture industry.

"World-class researchers will be based at this facility and will help to make new horticultural technology and best-practice more accessible to NSW farmers."

The Premier was so impressed by the quality of produce on offer at Mr Clackson's farm, that she gladly accepted some buk choy, said to be for her dinner that evening. **va**

Calculator helps growers estimate carbon footprint

Vegetable growers will soon be able to track their effect on the environment with a new online tool, helping them to estimate their impact.

The carbon footprint tool, HortCarbonInfo, can be used to estimate the carbon footprint of a horticultural farm, as well as learn about greenhouse gas emissions and ways to reduce them.

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) senior principal horticulturist Peter Deuter said while horticulture contributed only very slightly to climate change, the calculator would help promote industry awareness.

"Greenhouse gas emissions from horticulture are very low, accounting for less than 1 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia,

compared with 16 per cent of emissions from all of agriculture," he said.

"However, there are opportunities to reduce these emissions further, and gain additional advantages of reduced costs as well.

"This is where the carbon footprint tool comes in as the first step towards reducing emissions."

Mr Deuter said the tool, in the form of a spreadsheet, was very easy to use.

How to use

"Grower's input data into the calculator's database in the fields of boundary (for example, a whole farm's emissions over

one year), electricity and fuel, fertiliser use, crops and area planted, waste and refrigeration," he said.

"From here, click the 'calculate carbon footprint' button and the tool will calculate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions based on your farm's consumption.

"Additional information is also provided to assist in understanding greenhouse gas emissions, how these might be reduced or mitigated, and some of the uncertainties associated with measuring (estimating) and reducing emissions."

HortCarbonInfo was created as part of the project "Improving the Capacity of Queensland

Intensive Agriculture to Manage Climate Change," funded by the Department of Agriculture, Farming and Forestry, through the Queensland Farmers Federation and Growcom.

The calculator, as well as other tools, can be found under 'Horticulture Carbon Footprinting Tools' on the Horticulture Australia website at www.horticulture.com.au **va**



For more information on horticulture and climate change, visit: www.deedi.qld.gov.au and go to 'Agriculture' icon in the 'Queensland Industries' box, then 'Plants', 'Fruit and vegetables' and 'Drought'.

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Grave fears for Bacchus Marsh Growers

Bacchus Marsh growers are fighting for survival as the lack of water supply threatens production.

MOOBABOOL Shire Council fears Bacchus Marsh's vegetable growing industry could collapse within weeks if a water supply is not secured, as reported in the Ballarat Courier. The district which provides a large proportion of the Coles' lettuce supply is said to only have weeks of water left due to the drought, diminishing

groundwater and surface water in the Pykes Creek and Merrimuc reservoirs.

Heavy February rains which led to some of the area being flooded provided some relief but a long term solution is needed. Last month, a council delegation met with Water Minister Tim Holding and Member for Melton, Don Nardella to talk about an emergency irrigation

supply for the area. Shire Mayor Pat Toohey said between 10 and 15 megalitres of water a day was needed to allow farmers to keep growing lettuce, which was supplied to Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales daily and exported overseas.

"We are looking at this iconic valley of vegetable production being lost ... if we cannot obtain emergency water supplies,"

Cr Toohey said. Shire Chief Executive Officer Robert Dobrzynski said Mr Holding would seek advice from Southern Rural Water and the Department of Sustainability and Environment on what emergency supplies were available, such as water trading. Mr Holding will also look at long-term solutions. [va](#)

Recent minor use permits

Permit number	Permit description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date issued	Expiry date	States covered
CORN				
PER11355	abamectin / sweet corn / Two-spotted mite	19/01/2010	10/09/2012	All states except Vic
LEGUME VEGETABLES				
PER11765	Paramite (etoxazole) / snow peas & sugar snap peas / Two-spotted mite	6/01/2010	31/12/2012	All states except Vic
PER10090	Iprodione / Brussels sprout / Grey mould	12/01/2010	1/08/2015	All states except Vic
ALLIUMS				
PER11763	Pirimicarb / spring onions / aphids	6/01/2010	31/12/2012	All states except Vic
LEAFY VEGETABLES				
PER11651	Acramite (bifenazate) / lettuce (head and leafy varieties in protected situations only) / Two-spotted mite	22/01/10	31/12/12	SA, WA, and QLD only
ROOT VEGETABLES				
PER11935	Bayfidan (triadimenol) / parsnips, radish, swede and turnip / Powdery mildew	5/02/2010	30/06/2013	All States
PER11950	Chlorothalonil / beetroot, celeriac, parsnips, papaya, Rubus & Ribes, spring onions and tamarillo / various diseases	1/04/2010	31/03/2013	All states except Vic; tamarillo for NSW only
FRUITING VEGETABLES				
PER10800	Triadimenol / chillies and paprika / Powdery mildew	2/02/2010	30/06/2013	All states except Vic
BRASSICAS				
PER10276	Filan (boscalid) / brassicas, brassica leafy vegetables, lettuce, beans / Sclerotinia rot	1/02/2010	31/01/2013	All states except Vic



Ask the industry

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

Q ■ What is fungicide resistance and how does it evolve?

Resistance to a fungicide may be defined as 'a heritable change in the sensitivity of a disease population that is reflected in the repeated failure of a product to achieve the expected level of control when used according to the label recommendation for that disease' (ref CropLife International)

Resistance arises through the over-use and/or misuse of a fungicide against a disease and results in the selection of resistant forms of the disease and the consequent evolution of populations that are resistant to that fungicide.

Resistance to agricultural fungicides generally evolves following the intensive use of agricultural fungicides for disease control. In any disease population there are may be a small number of individuals that are naturally resistant to a fungicide, even before the fungicide is used. When the fungicide is used, these individuals survive, mature and reproduce whereas the majority of the susceptible disease population is controlled. Continued use of a fungicide from the same fungicide mode of action (resistance) group can eventually result in a significant proportion of the disease population developing resistance to the fungicide being applied.

The main factors that influence the evolution of fungicide resistance are:

- The **FREQUENCY** of use of fungicides from the same mode of action group. Note that the multi-sited or unspecified mode of action chemicals, do not necessarily have similar modes of action.
- The **EFFICACY** of a fungicide, generally speaking the more effective fungicides place greater

selection pressure for resistance on a population.

- The **NUMBER OF MODES OF ACTION** a fungicide has.

Generally speaking, the more modes of action a fungicide has, the harder it is for a pest to evolve resistance.

- **RESISTANCE GENETICS**

The speed development of resistance will vary from one mode of action to another, depending upon how resistance is inherited. Also of critical practical importance is whether the resistant disease has a "fitness" penalty that reduces its ability to survive compared with other non-resistant individuals. This leads to "unstable" resistance, where there is a tendency for a population to revert to susceptibility once the selection pressure (a fungicide group) is removed. "Stable" resistance is the reverse situation where resistant individuals are just as fit as susceptible individuals and tend to survive in a population regardless of whether a fungicide continues to be used or not. Consequently, it is much harder to manage stable resistance.

Pest Population Dynamics/Biology

Diseases that regularly show a sexual phase (and therefore readily undergo genetic recombination), produce large numbers of spores and have a short life cycle, will tend to evolve resistance faster than diseases with long life cycles and small numbers of offspring. Resistance is also more likely to be detected in larger disease populations.

Remember to always follow the fungicide resistance management strategies either on the fungicide label or on the CropLife website: (www.croplifeaustralia.org.au) to ensure a long and effective fungicide program on your property. **va**

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Convention

Anticipation is soaring as the industry counts down to the inaugural 2010 AUSVEG Conrad Jupiters on the Gold Coast from May 27 - 30.

Unprecedented benefits await growers at this year's National Convention, as the list of high caliber speakers and trade show exhibitors continues to grow rapidly. The AUSVEG National Convention will feature the vegetable industry's National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner and promises to be the landmark event of the year.

International keynote speaker Sarah Pettitt, of the Horticulture and Potatoes Board of the National Farmers' Union UK, and Independent Senator for South Australia, Nick Xenophon have been added to the impressive list of speakers which includes former Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery.

Other celebrity speakers will be announced shortly and they will join leading scientists and industry leaders, who are to deliver ground breaking research and development outcomes as part of the R&D speaker sessions. A family-friendly social program designed specifically for growers provides the icing on the cake.

Growers and industry

representatives will experience a program packed with invaluable networking opportunities and entertainment. Highlights include: Robert "Dipper" DiPierdomenico in the role of MC during trade show events, the amazing Australian Outback Spectacular- offered free of charge to full delegates, and the chance to listen to some of the Australia's brightest minds discuss the latest outcomes in R&D.

While the Convention will celebrate the Australian vegetable industry, it will also have an international flavour, with delegates confirmed from New Zealand, The United Kingdom and America.

Sensational Speakers

Sarah Pettitt, Chair of the Horticulture and Potatoes Board of the National Farmers' Union in the United Kingdom, has been announced as the keynote speaker at the Women in Horticulture Breakfast.

A Lincolnshire-based grower of field vegetables and a partner in the family farming business

growing sprouts and purple-spouting broccoli, Ms Pettitt was Vice Horticulture Chair of the organization for four years before stepping up to the role of Chair in March 2009.

The announcement of Senator Xenophon as a keynote speaker on Friday 28, is also a huge addition for the convention. Senator Xenophon – whose profile has risen significantly since winning his seat as an independent – has recently been campaigning on issues relevant to the horticulture industry, including truth in labeling laws. He has been a member of Federal Parliament since 2007.

Finally agricultural scientist and lawyer Kathryn Adams has also been announced as a

speaker.

Ms Adams has held senior executive positions in government agencies and business enterprises, and brings to the Convention, specialised knowledge gained through running workshops and conferences on the use of intellectual property in horticulture.

R&D Focus

A list of prominent speakers for the R&D programme has been finalised, covering a wide range of topics, including insects and diseases, soil health and water, innovations in new technologies and crop production and climate change. This year's four R&D



takes shape

National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence, to be held at

speakers are at the head of their field.

Dr Sandra McDougall, an Industry Leader in Field Vegetables with Science and Innovation, Primary Industries at Industry and Investment NSW, will discuss issues concerned with insects and diseases.

Soil health and water will be covered by Dr Ian Porter, a Biosciences Research specialist with the Department of Primary Industries, while new Vegetable IAC Chair Mr Peter Deuter from DEEDI will cover climate change.

Dr Susan Lambert, a Post-doctoral Fellow in Sustainable

Vegetable Production at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research will cover innovations in new technologies and crop production.

The R&D session will be Chaired by Mr Peter Dal Santo of AgAware Consulting Pty Ltd, who also chairs the industry's Chemical Working Group.

The list of exhibitors at the Trade Show is also growing with upwards of 80 Exhibitors expected. Further announcements regarding the trade show and entertainment will be released in the coming months.

Spectacular Social Program

As part of the convention's exciting social program, AUSVEG

has announced the special theme night will be held at the Australian Outback Spectacular.

The Spectacular's tribute to the Australian Light Horse Brigade has made headlines around the country for its deeply moving story of our nations most courageous diggers, and now growers have the chance to see it first hand.

A first class steak dinner will be followed by a truly amazing show capturing the grandeur of the outback, presented in a giant arena with seating for 1000 guests.

The social program also contains many other exciting opportunities to mix and network with growers and industry representatives from across the country, and concludes with a corporate golf day on the Sunday, held at Palm Meadows, one of the Gold Coast's most renowned courses.

New partnerships for the Convention have also been announced. Boomaroo Nurseries, Dow AgroSciences, VinRowe Farm Machinery and Brisbane Produce Market were last month added to the significant

list of well respected industry organisations who are supporting the AUSVEG National Convention.

All companies will feature prominently throughout the Convention, including in the Trade Show and at other key convention events. AUSVEG is also pleased to announce a strategic partnership with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

To assist delegates wishing to attend the Convention, AUSVEG has negotiated heavily-discounted accommodation rates at Conrad Jupiters Hotel Casino and extended early bird rates until the Friday, 26 March. Details of these special offers and registration costs have and will continue to be distributed to the industry in the coming weeks.

Growers who are interested in receiving a convention brochure, companies wishing to display at the Trade Show or businesses wishing to become strategic partners with AUSVEG should call (03) 9544 8098 or email <convention@ausveg.com.au>

Information is also available on the AUSVEG website: www.ausveg.com.au/convention



2010 National Awards for Excellence

A highlight of the 2010 AUSVEG National Convention will be the National Awards for Excellence to be held on Saturday, 29 May. The awards will celebrate the hard work of our industry's most successful growers, researchers and businesses across the supply chain, in a gala evening at Conrad Jupiters on the Gold Coast.

Nominations are being sought in the following categories:

Grower of the Year Proudly sponsored by

(Open to all vegetable and potato growers)

- 1) Vegetable/potato grower is outstanding across all aspects of vegetable production, including growing, environmental management, staff management and product quality.
- 2) Grower is innovative, challenges convention and implements efficient practices (such as integrated pest management, minimising wastage, water conservation, precision agriculture, technology advances, and value-adding to product).
- 3) Grower actively contributes to broader industry (such as participating in international R&D tours, industry committees, forums, conferences or field days).

Young Grower of the Year Proudly sponsored by

(35 years of age or less as at 29 May 2010)

- 1) Vegetable/potato grower shows excellent business acumen and innovation and has applied it on-farm and in the wider farming community when practicable.
- 2) Grower demonstrates a high level of commitment to the industry, possibly illustrated through involvement in off-farm activities, participation as a member of industry groups/committees or in community activities (such as Landcare).

Industry Impact Award Proudly sponsored by

- 1) Individual/business has had a positive impact on the vegetable/potato industry through means such as innovation, research, or irrigation/water management techniques.
- 2) The impact has resulted in a significant contribution to best farm practice.

Industry Recognition Award Proudly sponsored by *The miracles of science™*

- 1) Individual has provided overall service to the industry on a local, state or national level over a long period of time.
- 2) Individual is pro-active in advancing the industry.
- 3) Individual uses their leadership skills for the greater good of the industry.

Productivity Partner Award Proudly sponsored by

- 1) Business has developed a new solution directly benefiting growers through improving their productivity, for example through reducing costs or environmental impact.
- 2) Business has significantly contributed in a positive manner to the Australian vegetable/potato industry.
- 3) Business has shown commitment to improving the industry's productivity.
- 4) New practice has delivered tangible, measurable results.

Innovative Marketing Award Proudly sponsored by

(Implementation within the last three years)

- 1) Individual/business has created an innovative marketing solution, process or program.
- 2) Individual/business has created new market opportunities for vegetables/potato products.
- 3) Innovation has had significant impact on the industry and has potential for long term positive effects through sales, awareness, reach, etc.
- 4) Innovation has delivered tangible, measurable results.

Women in Horticulture Award

- 1) Female industry member has demonstrated outstanding ability and success in their chosen field, whether it is growing, research and development, farm management, or otherwise.
- 2) Individual is pro-active and has shown commitment to achieving success in the industry.
- 3) Has a reputation for mentoring women in horticulture.

Researcher of the Year Bayer CropScience

- 1) Researcher has track record of research or extension work that has advanced the industry offering long-term industry benefits.
- 2) Researcher actively communicates research outcomes and encourages uptake of outcomes on-farm.
- 3) Researcher contributes research or extension work that advances the reputation of Australian science internationally.



2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Award winners [from left] Dr Paul Horne, Steve Skopilianos, Kim Vincent, Nathan Clackson and Peter Dal Santo.



Nominations Now Open

Nominations for the AUSVEG 2010 National Awards for Excellence are now open. To nominate yourself or someone you know in any of the categories listed, please fill in the form and return to the address listed below.

- Nominations will close on 24 April 2010

Nominee details:

Name: _____

Business/Organisation/Farm name: _____

Nominated award: _____

Nominee's contribution to industry (additional information may be attached): _____

Nominator details: (your details)

Name: _____

Business/Organisation/Farm name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (work) _____ (mobile) _____

Fax: _____ E-mail _____

Please return nomination form to:

AUSVEG Ltd, PO Box 563, Mulgrave VIC, Australia 3170 Tel: +61 3 9544 8098 Fax: + 61 3 9558 6199

NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting: Annual Levy Payers' Meeting
Date and Time: Friday 28 May 2010, 2:30-3:00pm – Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting
Location: Surfers Paradise Room, The Pavillion, Conrad Jupiters, Broadbeach Island, Gold Coast, Queensland
RSVP to Ms Erin Lyall: (03) 9544 8098, erin.lyall@ausveg.com.au
<http://ausveg.com.au/events-conferences.cfm>



Introducing the new Independent chair of the Vegetable IAC

After an extensive recruitment search, Mr Peter Deuter, Senior Principal Horticulturist at the Gatton Research Station in Queensland, has been appointed the new independent chair of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee. He spoke with Erin Lyall about taking on the challenge.

In January this year, the AUSVEG Board resolved to nominate Peter Deuter to the role of Independent Chair of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee, the IAC responsible for recommendations in relation to the largest amount of levy-funded R&D projects in the horticulture industry.

Mr Deuter's mix of research and development experience in the public sector, together with his leadership expertise in co-ordinating national projects, made him an ideal appointee to the role of chair. Having previously been involved with a number of important R&D projects funded by the horticultural industry, Mr Deuter is well qualified with a Master of Agricultural Studies and a Bachelor Degree in Applied Science from the University of Queensland.

Born into a family of

Queensland growers, Mr Deuter spoke of his appointment, "I believe the vegetable industry is incredibly significant in Australia and I feel honoured to be given the responsibility of chairing such an important committee," he said.

Mr Deuter has established strong links with growers through various industry activities including being the lead presenter in last year's series of EnviroVeg Climate Change seminars.

He will meet face-to-face with the other members of the Vegetable IAC twice a year and regularly through telephone conferences to assess project proposals and other industry issues with the view to make considered recommendations to HAL on how R&D levy funds should be distributed to best meet the needs of the industry.

IAC In-depth

Assessing how levy funds should be spent on R&D for the Australian vegetable industry is a major component of the IAC's responsibilities. As a research scientist, Mr Deuter is determined to bring an understanding of the scientific research many R&D proposals are based on, to his role of chair, in order to reach the best outcomes for growers.

He is also excited by the refreshed committee, which he believes has a good blend of practice, science and farm experience.

"The combined expertise of the new Vegetable IAC is a great opportunity to take research and development to a new level of understanding for the future," Mr Deuter said.

The Gatton-based researcher also stressed the importance of

transparency within the IAC, particularly when there are potentially conflicting interests.

"I have been a member of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Working Group for five years and a number of times people have declared a conflicting interest in a particular issue. They have then either not taken part in the discussion or had no influence in the decision, and this is a process I plan on continuing with in IAC meetings to come," he said.

The IAC must be prepared to work with the various stakeholders that make up the vegetable industry. Managing the interests of these different stakeholders while remaining objective is something Mr Deuter perceives as being essential in his role as chair.

"I believe in taking a national approach and being transparent, open and honest with the way





we conduct ourselves and the recommendations we make," he said.

Mr Deuter explained that the IAC holds a responsibility to the entire vegetable growing industry, and with assistance from Advisory Groups and Working Groups, has the significant task of understanding how to apply the vegetable industry's Strategic Plan and to ensure R&D resources are directed fairly and appropriately across the industry.

"Our responsibility is to ensure funds are spent appropriately and advise HAL of the areas we believe require more focus. We must determine the priorities for the vegetable industry and look at ways we can address them," he said.

Climate concern

Mr Deuter has been heavily involved with climate based science for more than 10 years and has developed a growing concern for the impacts climate change will have on Australian vegetable growers.

He explained that growers are dealing with climate variables every day and over time have coped with significant changes in climate, sometimes

without even realising it. Growers adapted simply because they had to.

"In the past growers have been very good at dealing with variability, however, I'm very concerned about the significance of the changes scientists

climate change is so significant they have to make major changes."

Mr Deuter explained that the prominence of everyday costs in growers' lives overshadow any long-term concerns they might have regarding climate change.

“ I believe in taking a national approach and being transparent, open and honest with the way we conduct ourselves and the recommendations we make. ”

around the world are predicting and growers' capacity to deal with them, despite their best efforts," Mr Deuter said.

"Evidence has shown that growers have been able to adapt in the past and I believe they are capable of continuing to adapt for at least the next 10 to 15 years, before the increase in temperature as a result of

"Many growers don't currently see climate change as a high priority because making profit in a business where costs of labour are continually increasing is more important," he said.

When asked about other challenges Australian growers are faced with, Mr Deuter said that while growers face numerous challenges every day, the

growing resistance many pests have to pesticides is of ongoing concern. He believes it is imperative growers manage this resistance through the use of Integrated Pest and Disease Management.

"Growers have shifted their position from an absolute dependence on one pesticide to integrated measures that will reduce risk and ensure their product meets market specifications. This is an ongoing process in which R&D funding has played a critical role," he said.

Another challenge facing growers is the expectation marketers and consumers have with regards to product quality, which is placing additional pressure on growers, explained Mr Deuter. Blemishes and marks are not tolerated and this flows through to suppliers who are selecting only the best produce for their outlets.

The appointment of independent chair of the IAC brings with it many hurdles to clear. Despite this, Mr Deuter is motivated and excited to face these and other challenges head-on, and will no doubt become an invaluable asset to the vegetable industry. **va**

New tool kit for growers

Growers are being encouraged to use a newly designed tool kit to navigate through the issues of urban encroachment.

The great Aussie dream of a 'quarter-acre block', along with inner city housing affordability pressure on city fringes. Understanding the issues arising from land use planning for these areas, labelled 'peri-urban', has never been more important for vegetable growers.

The concept of agricultural land 'awaiting urban development' via an ad hoc process of conversion is often regarded as

an inevitable outcome of population and economic growth.

The vegetable industry is amongst many other horticultural industries affected by the expansion of cities into traditional agricultural growing areas.

As urban expansion continues to grow, horticultural industries find themselves sharing the environment with lifestyle farmers and non-rural residents. The issue is particularly important to many intensive agricultural

industries and has been on the government planning radar as a result of land use conflict in peri-urban areas.

Conflict can arise over such things as noise from dogs, trucks and farm equipment, odour from fertilisers and sprays, health concerns about spray drift, access to water and visual intrusion from things such as hail netting.

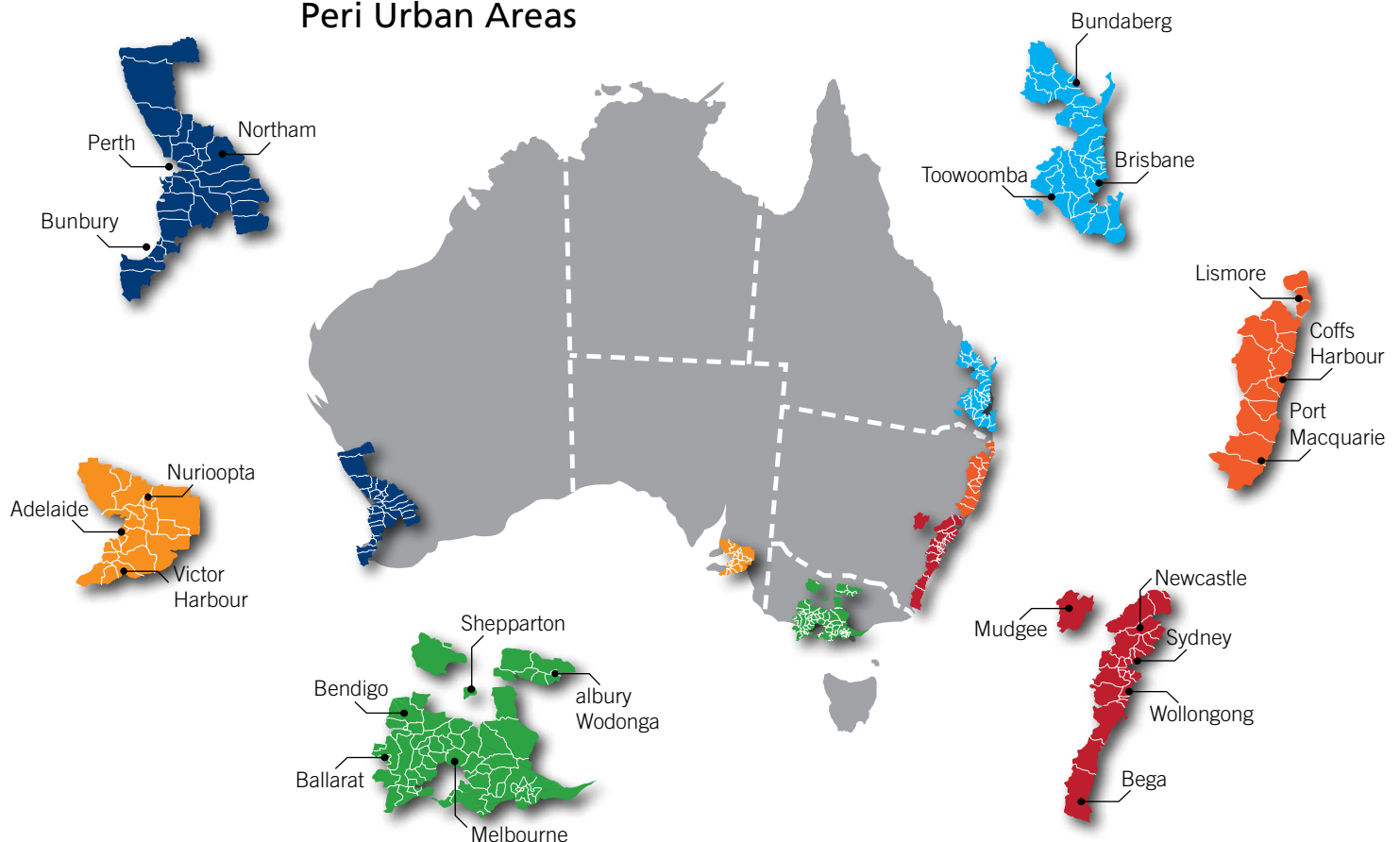
While growers face the challenge of continuing to make a living in an increasingly

urbanised environment, planners must balance the demands of population growth with the need to maintain agricultural businesses, protect the environment and ensure food supply.

Joining the debate

The responsibility for assessing development and subdivision proposals generally falls on local government who, by their own admission, are under resourced and not well placed to address the issues. Input from existing

Peri Urban Areas



A peri-urban area is commonly understood to be land adjacent to the edge of an urban area, extending from the built up edge of the city to the rural hinterland.


landholders would serve to assist planners in their decisions. To help growers understand and address issues related to peri-urban planning, a study was commissioned in 2007 as part of the HAL across industry funded program.

The project comprised a literature review on peri-urban horticulture and land use planning, which led to the development of a 'tool-kit' made up of practical guidelines to help growers navigate through land use planning jargon and the system itself.

HAL project manager Ravi Hegde says the planning system can be a minefield and the report, Peri-urban horticulture and land use planning: Literature Review & Tool-kit, would help people to understand how Federal, state and local governments work to put the whole planning system in place.

"It has a glossary of terms which gives people an everyday English understanding of jargon," Mr Hegde says. "It also provides some practical

information about buffers. Having buffers in place will reduce the potential for conflict with those neighbours."

The tool-kit provides a series of fact sheets designed to help users understand the planning process and equip them to become involved in the land use debate at a local level. 

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Across industry project addresses the pressure of expanding city fringes.
- Tool kit establishes areas of concern in regards to local land issues.
- Fact sheets are now designed to help users understand the planning process and equip them to become involved in the land use debate at a local level.

• For more information contact:
 Ravi Hegde, Industry Analysis Manager, Horticulture Australia
 Email: <ravi.hegde@horticulture.com.au>
 Phone: 02 8295 2338
 Project number: AH07031

Topics Featured in the Tool Kit:

- **Understanding the land use planning system** – a quick guide to the Australian planning system which outlines the various levels of legislation and how it affects peri-urban stakeholders.
- **Zoning** – helps those seeking to develop their land or preserve it for agricultural use to understand how governments use zoning controls and the limitations of the current system.
- **Land use conflict** – an outline of some of the sources of disputes between neighbours in peri-urban areas and some possible practical approaches to address them.
- **Buffers** – examines the pros and cons of using land buffers between neighbours to reduce conflict.
- **Urban growth boundaries** – looks at the urban containment policy designed to protect peri-urban horticulture.
- **Transfer of development rights** – examines the system by which landowners can transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to another parcel of land in order to protect both investment opportunities and horticultural production.
- **Right to farm** – outlines a legislative approach that's used in the US and Tasmania to deal with land use conflicts.

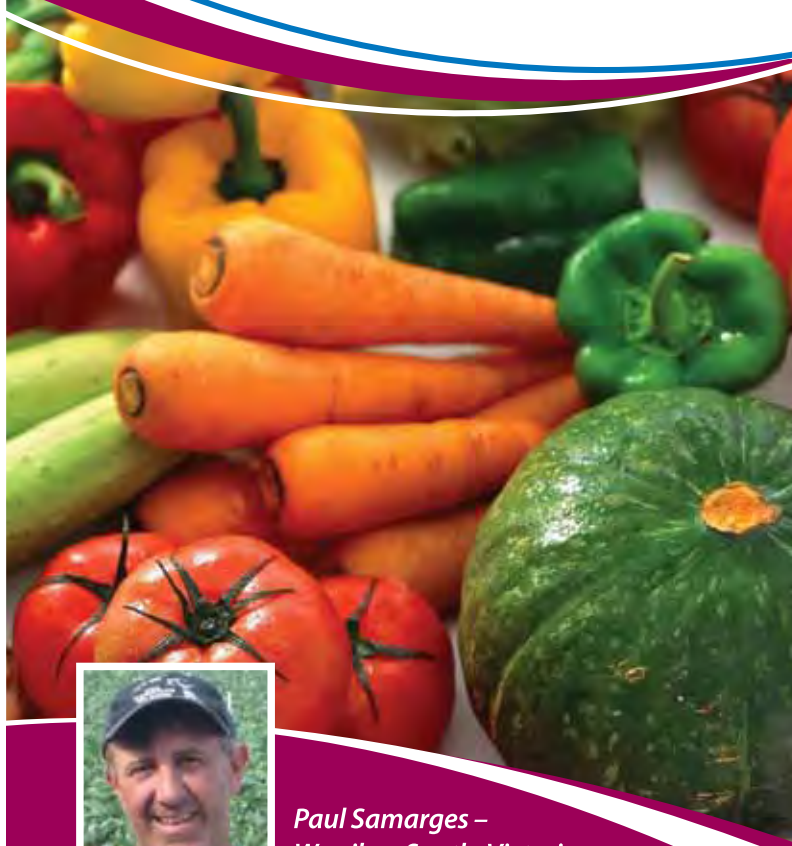
The report and tool kit can be accessed at <http://www.horticulture.com.au/industries/>

This across industry project was funded by HAL using industry levies and voluntary contributions with matched funds from the Federal Government.

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Image makeover for vegetable Industry

The Australian vegetable industry is to undergo an image make-over with a DVD to be launched by the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Cooperative; focusing on promoting career opportunities in the industry, writes Mignonne Rawson.

A new project, initiated by the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Cooperative (BFVG), is set to change the face of the vegetable industry, with a DVD to be launched later this year.

The project, called 'Multi-Media Tools to Showcase Career Opportunities in the Australian Vegetable Supply Chain', will involve the filming of successful people in the Australian vegetable industry and is to be made into a DVD to be distributed around Australia.

The aim of the project is to present a diverse range of jobs available in the industry to encourage people, especially young adults leaving school or university, to consider it as

an exciting career option. For those already in the industry it is hoped that the project will urge them to strive towards career advancement.

BFVG Executive Officer, Peter Peterson, said that this project would help update the image of the vegetable industry and highlight the diversity of innovations being made.

"People in the industry can now work with sophisticated machinery and advanced technologies. There are people making amazing progress in pest, water and soil management practices and finding new ways to deal with quality and environmental assurance issues. The business of growing vegetables is very much a cut-

ting edge primary industry," said Mr Peterson.

Nominations to take part in the films were collected late last year and a total of 19 people from around the country were selected to participate.

BFVG Project Officer, Vanessa Clark, said the selection criteria took into account the need for a range of jobs to be represented. Ms Clark spoke with countless people working in the industry as well as grower groups from around the country, to help with suggestions.

"I also looked at people who have been profiled or won industry awards and those who are leaders and successful in their jobs. I wanted a balance of all sorts of jobs to make up the

“ We are just trying to show people what is out there. ”



group," she said.

Ms Clark said that the majority of the participants selected were young, up-and-coming people, but there were also those further into their careers whose success could be demonstrated, as well as the odd, really established leader who could provide an overview of careers and career paths.

"I tried to get mainly younger people because a lot of the industry leaders are close to

Valley, Queensland; Tasmania; Gippsland, Victoria; New South Wales; Adelaide Hills, South Australia; and around Perth, Western Australia. They will interview the participants about their careers, while filming a range of daily activities to highlight job roles.

The interviews will be produced into media clips and distributed in DVD format, as well as made available online, to be released in June 2010.

“The DVD will also highlight other benefits of working in the industry, that many young people would not know about, such as the travel opportunities and the potential for personal development.”

retirement age and this project is about getting younger people to fill the void when these older leaders leave," she said.

"This ties in with the audience we are focussing on. Young people want to see other young people being successful."

Ms Clark said the objective of the project was to raise awareness since there was a deeply ingrained notion that vegetable growing was a pretty unsophisticated occupation.

"Hopefully this will help to change the image of the vegetable industry, which until now has been just about being out in the mud. We are also trying to raise awareness of other things such as the high tech nature of it," she said.

"The DVD will also highlight other benefits of working in the industry, that many young people would not know about, such as the travel opportunities, the potential for personal development, including field trips, going to conferences, leadership courses, and all the extra things available that people are not aware of.

BFGV has partnered with Central Queensland University to film, edit and compile the case studies, which will be about two minutes each in length. A team of three will be travelling to the Lockyer

"DVDs will be going out to industry organisations, careers and training organisations, Universities, TAFES and Agriculture colleges and schools but the main distribution point will be on the internet," said Ms Clark.

This project has been funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) using the vegetable levy and matched funds from the Australian Government. 

THE BOTTOM LINE

- New project attempts to illustrate job opportunities across the Vegetable Industry
- Highlights current and future leaders and the diversity of jobs across the industry supply chain
- A DVD showcasing the various successful people will be released in June 2010 to promote opportunities in the industry.

i For more information contact:
Project Officer Vanessa Clark at BFGV
Email: <vanessa.clark@bfgv.com.au>
Phone: 07 4153 3007
or visit:
www.ausveg.com/levypayers
Project number: VG09067



Film Crew Members:
Kelly Patrick on camera, Robyn Rudd

The not



so ordinary

Dr Melina Parker

Dr Melina Parker may consider herself just a typical Tasmanian grower, but with a PhD in marketing and a family history in vegetable growing that dates back an incredible six generations, she is anything but, writes David O'Neill.

“I’m not sure if I’ll make for interesting reading,” Dr Parker said when we first phoned to see if we could feature the impressive young grower.

But a chance to speak with a lifelong and passionate grower – newly appointed to the Industry Advisory Committee for Vegetables – was an opportunity we were not about to miss.

On the very place where her ancestors settled in the 1850s, ‘Milton Farms’ continues a long family tradition of vegetable growing.

The 330 hectare property, situated 10 minutes drive from Devonport on Tasmania’s northwest coast, is owned and run by Dr Parker’s father and uncle. Along with her cousin Nathan, she is employed as a manager – ensuring vegetable growing in the family continues into a sixth generation.

Dr Parker’s family heritage, as she explains, is the driving force behind the business’s philosophy.

“Because of our long family history, it has been instilled in us from an early age to look after the land in terms of sustainability to ensure that future generations can continue to grow vegetables and carry on

the tradition,” she said.

“My cousin has two daughters, so we might just see a seventh generation at Milton Farms.”

For all but six years, Dr Parker has lived on the property, yet in that brief period she was able to

vegetable grower,” she said.

Growing mostly carrots, cauliflower and cabbage, Milton Farms has also recently ventured into a new project, growing wasabi and distributing it through a joint venture with two other Tasmanian growers.

limited industry knowledge about growing the vegetable in Australia, Dr Parker explains that it is “slowly, slowly with wasabi,” allocating only a small section of the farm to grow the labour and cost intensive crop.

Dr Parker has taken on the role of marketing manager for the joint venture, using her extensive experience and expertise to grow the brand. She suggests, however, that regardless of the commodity that a grower produces, marketing is increasingly important in the vegetable industry.

“Marketing is about much more than creating a logo, it’s about developing a strategic plan that incorporates everything involved in the sale of the product,” Dr Parker said.

“It’s about carefully designed branding and working with suppliers to ensure consumer preferences are known and targeted.”

“Because of our long family history, it has been instilled in us from an early age to look after the land in terms of sustainability, to ensure that future generations can continue to grow vegetables and carry on the tradition.”

complete a business degree and her PhD in marketing.

Despite a stint as a marketing executive, Dr Parker says she was always destined to return to the farm.

“For as long as I can remember I’ve dreamt of becoming a

The project, under the banner of Shima Wasabi (shima meaning “island” in Japanese), was featured as part of our Eastern I section in our November volume and is a new direction for the Parker family.

As a result of the relatively

Consumer Focus

One such consumer preference, which is rapidly changing according to Dr Parker, is the consumer’s desire for produce that is grown with an environmentally friendly approach.

“There has been a push from

continued page 28

consumers in recent years that I believe will only get stronger," she said.

"Demand for environmentally friendly products will no doubt continue to rise.

"Understanding demand is very much a challenge for growers, as we are so removed from consumers. We need to keep communication channels open with our trade partners to keep abreast of consumer preferences."

Another consumer driven push is an increased preference for locally grown produce, which Dr Parker believes illustrates why marketing is so important.

"Marketing is particularly essential to seize this opportunity and develop branding which ensures 'being local' becomes a competitive advantage," she said.

"This means working with suppliers, to ensure customers are fully aware of what products are grown locally in the region."

Apart from understanding consumer values, another reason for growers to remain in constant communication with their suppliers, as Dr Parker

explains, is the critical role it plays in building loyalty with trade partners.

"Keeping information flowing and developing personal relationships will help growers build loyalty with their trade partners and ensure the long term survival of their business." Dr Parker said.

Changing Times

In her many years involved in vegetable growing, Dr Parker has seen the industry go through a significant amount of change, incorporating new innovations and vastly improved techniques.

Integrated pest management and irrigation changes are amongst the most significant according to Dr Parker, and have helped counteract rising costs such as labour.

Another major change she identifies is the expansion of paddocks, which have grown in size dramatically since the farm was first established.

"It's really about economies of scale, reducing cost by producing on a larger scale," Dr Parker said.



Don

Milton Farms, Don, situated west of Devonport on Tasmania's northern coast.



Dr Parker's intelligence, education, and passion for growing vegetables made her an ideal candidate to join the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC).

She was appointed to the committee after recommendations from AUSVEG were approved by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) in February.

Importantly, the Vegetable IAC makes recommendations about how research and development (R&D) levy funds should be invested to best meet the needs of the vegetable industry.

The role will see Dr Parker meet with other members of the committee in person twice a year and regularly through telephone conferences.

Dr Parker's experience and marketing expertise will see her also play a pivotal role in the Market Development and Consumer Advisory Group which provides advice to the committee to ensure recommendations made to HAL will maximise industry benefit in accordance with the industry's broader strategic imperatives.

Though she might not like to admit it, it is clear that Dr Parker is anything but your typical grower. **va**

“Marketing is about much more than creating a logo, it's about developing a strategic plan that incorporates everything involved in the sale of the product.”



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Export indu

Australian vegetables will continue to be exported to Indonesia after the valuable writes Dzintra Horder.

Indonesia has been a valuable export market for Australian growers for many years. In 2008/09 almost \$6 million of vegetables were exported to Indonesia, 18 per cent of the total horticultural exports, valued at \$33 million.

But late last year this crucial market was almost lost due to the Indonesian Government finalising new regulations concerned with 'acceptable food safety control'.

The changes which placed the onus on the Australian Government to provide evidence of our food safety programme, first came to light in April 2007. The Indonesian Government released the first draft of a ministerial decree, requiring evidence of acceptable food safety control from the country of origin, for the import and export of (plant grown) fresh food. The ramifications for those Australian industries exporting to Indonesia were

obviously significant and negotiations began to maintain market access for Australian growers.

By July 2009, following the release of a number of revised drafts of the decree, the Indonesian Government advised that implementation of the new regulations would occur on 19 August 2009. Australia was provided four options for compliance, among those was an 'equivalence agreement' or recognition of Australia's food safety surveillance system.

Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) began assisting the extensive work already being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), providing the industry information required to keep the market open. Once details of the regulations were available, Australia had less than two months to prove its case.

HAL Product Integrity

“ If the delegation members weren't satisfied with Australia's food safety systems, the \$33 million market could have been jeopardised. ”

Manager, Richard Bennett, set to work gathering the evidence to prove that industries had measurable good agricultural practices with regard to chemical usage and a highly effective food safety programme.

Food Safety

Food Safety Standards became enforceable in Australia in February 2001. While Food Safety Standards apply to 'food businesses'; defined as businesses that process, wholesale or retail food, growers and packers are indirectly implicated in the standards. This is because food businesses are required to take all practicable measures to ensure that they only accept food that is not contaminated from suppliers. This has led to retailers such as Woolworths, Coles, Aldi and Metcash/IGA requiring their suppliers to be certified by an acceptable food safety system such as



Industry saved

market was saved thanks to an across industry project led by Richard Bennett,

Woolworths Quality Assurance Standard, SQF2000, SQF1000, Freshcare and Codex HACCP.

"To gain the necessary recognition we worked closely with DAFF to provide a comprehensive overview of Australian Food Standards Code and its application to horticulture to the Indonesian Government," Mr Bennett said.

Following a series of high level representations made by DAFF to the Indonesian Government, implementation of the Decree was delayed until 19 November 2009 and interim requirements were imposed to allow exports to continue through this period, including a list of pesticides used or a certificate of analysis for each consignment of vegetables sent.

At this point the Indonesian Government accepted an invitation to inspect Australian growers' and exporters' quality assurance systems and the trip took place in early December

2009. The vegetable, table grape, citrus, and apple and pear industries collaborated on a project funded by HAL using levies and matched funds from the Federal Government to enable the visit to occur.

Between December 3-10, the Indonesian delegation visited growers, packers, laboratories and central markets in south east Queensland and Western Australia. If the delegation members weren't satisfied with Australia's food safety systems, the \$33 million market could have been jeopardised at any point.

Quality Proven


Reports on residue testing, through the National Residue Survey and FreshTest, were also submitted. These reports demonstrated the effectiveness of quality assurance systems, and chemical management activities in particular, to manage chemical residue

issues in domestic and export markets.

"The FreshTest and National Residue Service reports gave evidence of our ability to manage agri-chemicals," Mr Bennett said.

"Testing verifies that Good Agricultural Practices are being followed by Australian producers."

"They could see from these reports how much produce is tested and what the results were. That, coupled with what they saw on site, was sufficient for the Indonesian Government to be convinced of the integrity of our activities, and on 3 February we were advised that our safety systems had been approved for two years.

"It's a great feeling to have it done because we know through this work we have made a significant difference. The leadership from DAFF contributed enormously to this outcome." 

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Australia's export market to Indonesia put at risk due to new regulations concerning acceptable food safety control.
- Across industry project provides industry information to prove the quality of Australia's food safety programme.
- Indonesian Government approves Australian safety systems for the next two years after delegates inspect farms, packers, laboratories and markets in QLD and WA.



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www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers

Project number: MT09077

Key word: Indonesia



Finding the Balance

Principal Research Scientist with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Dr Ian Porter paints the big picture for Vegetables Australia, writes David O'Neill.

The first impression of Dr Ian Porter is of an incredibly passionate and intelligent research scientist. A man who for more than 25 years has been working to find better outcomes for growers; pouring his heart into plant pathology and trying to understand the complexities of soil health.

But he is not a man blinded by his passion, not too focused on his own work to understand his and the role of science in the big picture. His aim is to find a balance between the best outcomes for growers, which he believes, is maintaining productivity, while remaining environmentally responsible.

"I have a real passion for the grower," he said.

"I want to see the individual grower maintaining productivity and bringing in the dollars. But this must be inline with doing things that are practical and

environmentally sustainable, to achieve big picture success."

A life of learning

Dr Porter began his journey in agriculture at the University of Melbourne where he completed a bachelors degree in agricultural science, graduating with first class honours. He later obtained a PhD, studying the effect of solarisation on soil pathogens. Today he continues this quest for knowledge everyday in his role with the DPI.

Despite his obvious intelligence, he modestly attributes his impressive education and commitment to scientific research, to his love of horticulture and in particular plant pathology.

"I always enjoyed being outdoors and involved in horticulture, and I am excited by pathology; the interaction of

biological organisms with other things," Dr Porter said.

The majority of Dr Porter's time is spent leading his team of up to 20 researchers, who are immersed in outcome-focused research for growers. He is also the chairman of a United Nations committee, established to oversee the phase-out of soil uses for methyl bromide.

For more than two decades Dr Porter has been involved in scientific research and has seen a dramatic change in the focus of his study.

"Research used to centre on learning about different organisms and gaining controls which often involved the use of chemicals," he said.

"We are now starting to focus on finding mechanisms in soil that tip the balance against soil pathogens (soilborne diseases).

“It's about balancing the system, and every time we tip it one way we have a dramatic effect.”

Big picture focus

According to Dr Porter, chemicals still have an important role to play, but he believes that using them more efficiently must become the focus in order to find the right balance for growers.

"Man's effect on the environment is real and we must ensure that the inputs in the western world have no detrimental effect on the globe," he said.

Dr Porter explained that research can often lead to new developments such as organic fertilisers and the use of Integrated Pest Management, but that these developments can also have a significant impact on the environment.

"It's about balancing the system, and every time we tip it one way we have a dramatic effect," he said.

It is critical, especially in terms of soil health, Dr Porter explained.

"We need to understand the soil systems and be able to control soilborne diseases, which once there, you can never get rid of."

According to the dedicated scientist, his role is to 'truth'

products; provide an unbiased and totally independent outcome for growers.

He explains though that all outcomes need a big picture perspective. New developments may be beneficial in terms of the environment, yet might be detrimental to a grower's productivity, and therefore not viable.

"I think scientists need to have a very good strategic vision of the big picture, and put their research in balance with that picture," he said.

"We need to keep our perspective and not be fundamentally driven by our passion. Rather we need to focus on obtaining positive results that will benefit growers without causing a negative of equal measure somewhere else."

Communication the key

Another facet which Dr Porter sees as one of his major responsibilities, is communicating research outcomes to growers.

"It's all well and good to know what inputs will lead to optimum productivity but this information must be communicated to growers, otherwise nothing will change," he said.

He also indicated that it was important to monitor our international competitors, to understand their agendas and be prepared to act on what we expect them to do.

Dr Porter took time out of his busy schedule to give Vegetables Australia a tour

rewarding part of his job.

"I love working with good growers, they are tremendous characters and I'm excited by what we can achieve through further investigation of the organisms in soil systems," he said.

"My goal is to provide the

“ I love working with good growers, they are tremendous characters & I'm excited by what we can achieve through further investigation of the organisms in soil systems. ”

of the DPI's research centre, stopping to explain the different projects and just how the information will affect growers.

The DPI works closely with growers, using volunteered crops to test a wide range of research developments in regard to soil health. Dr Porter said that it was this part of his work (being out in the field with growers) which was the most

grower with exactly what inputs they need on their farm. This should reduce their costs and also reduce their environmental impact through finding a sustainable balance."

The lasting impression of Dr Ian Porter is of a man who will not sleep until this difficult task is achieved. **va**



Bring on the bugs

Flooding vegetable growing regions with parasitoid wasps could help growers reduce their reliance on chemical controls, according to researchers who undertook a fact-finding mission to South America.

Australia's \$7-billion-a-year horticulture industry is threatened by Queensland fruit fly, 'Qfly' (*Bactrocera tryoni*). In addition to direct damage to horticulture crops, Qfly's presence leads to significant restrictions on the access of Australian fruit and vegetables to domestic and international markets.

The presence — or even presumed presence — of Qfly necessitates substantial expenditure of public and industry funds for managing the pest to the level required by trading partners and consumers.

Australia's horticulture industries are also threatened by the ongoing risk of invasion by

related species from neighbouring countries. For example, the invasion of Asian papaya fruit fly (*Bactrocera papayae*) into Northern Australia in 1995 devastated crops in that region and cost \$33.5 million to eradicate — not including the tens of millions of dollars lost in the initial suspension of, and subsequent restrictions to, domestic and international trade.

Increased options for pest control

While there is a heavy reliance on pesticides to control such pests, growers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of adopting integrated management strategies for

“ Using natural enemies such as parasitoid wasps to control fruit flies has potential. ”

on-farm pest control. Two of the main chemicals used for the control of Qfly — dimethoate and fenthion — are currently under review, the outcomes of which will determine on what fruit and vegetable crops they can be used in the future. At the time of writing the review outcomes had yet to be finalised.

Australia's need for effective, integrated methods for the management of Qfly and invading exotic species is on the rise, and using natural enemies such as parasitoid wasps to control fruit flies has potential. When released in large numbers (an inundative release) as part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, parasitoid wasps have reduced



Fruit fly parasitoids could help growers reduce their reliance on chemical controls in the fight against Queensland fruit fly. Image supplied by Professor Geoff Gurr.



Queensland fruit fly causes direct damage to horticulture crops. Image supplied by G.T. O'Loughlin, Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org.

damage caused by fruit fly in places such as Hawaii and Guatemala, both of which have significant fruit fly problems.

Despite this and the prevalence of fruit flies in Australia, inundative releases of parasitoids are not used commonly in our country.

Lessons from abroad

The objective of a study tour to Central (Guatemala) and North America (Mexico, Florida and Hawaii) conducted in mid 2009 by Dr Olivia Reynolds (Industry and Investment NSW), Professor Geoff Gurr (Charles Sturt University) and PhD student Jennifer Spinner (CRC National Plant-Biosecurity) was to gain an understanding of the intricacies encountered with the mass rearing and inundative release of parasitoid wasps for the control of fruit fly.

A particular highlight was visiting the Planta Moscafruit in Tapachula, Mexico, which has the capacity to mass rear more than 50 million parasitoids per week.

One reason for the popularity of these parasitic

wasps in overseas fruit fly control is that once released, they are self-dispersing, giving wide coverage including areas where other techniques—such as spraying — cannot readily be applied. That advantage extends to populated areas where fruit flies can breed on backyard fruits and vegetables but where spraying is often unpopular.

Interestingly, Australian fruit fly enemies are included in the list of parasitoid species being used in the Americas, so their methods have direct applicability to Australia.

Bringing it home

In each country visited, the team received insights into the mass rearing of parasitoids. Returning home with a host of ideas to develop a mass-rearing facility in Australia, the team realised that it made sense to take on board the lessons learned from overseas.

For example, to avoid the difficulty of separating unparasitised fruit flies from parasitised (wasp-infested) pupae, the eggs and/or the larvae of the host fruit fly are irradiated to render

them sterile. The parasitoids can still lay their eggs in these sterile immatures, but any host fruit flies that emerge are sterile and will not be able to produce offspring.

A pilot study in Australia has shown that this approach is feasible for Qfly. The rearing environment including temperature, hygiene and exposure time are all important when rearing high-quality parasitoids.

Parasitoid species that are mass reared overseas include Australian species and close relatives, which means that many of the rearing protocols are already established. In New South Wales the Tri-State Fruit Fly Factory mass rears Qfly and often has a surplus of eggs that could be used to present to wasps for them to lay their eggs. Qfly host material can also be used to rear wasps, even when irradiated.

Should these practices become more commonplace in Australia, they could well prove to be another weapon in growers' ongoing battle against pests. 🌱

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Large releases of parasitoid insects and sterile pests—also known as inundative releases—are used overseas to help control pests.
- Queensland fruit fly is a particularly damaging pest for horticulture crops, and a suitable candidate for control measures such as inundative releases.
- A levy-subsidised tour to Central and South America researched the processes behind inundative releases, to see whether these could be implemented more frequently in Australia.



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Project number: MT06049

Keywords: Sterile insect technique

Hydroponic and Field Grown Asian vegetables put to the test

Research project examines the differences in quality and shelf life of Asian vegetables, grown hydroponically compared to those conventionally grown in soil.

The Sydney Basin has traditionally been the largest production area in Australia for a variety of Asian vegetables. Small scale growers have been working the region's soil ever since the first Chinese market gardeners established farms in the 1880s.

Traditional cropping in the region however, is under pressure. Limited water supplies, environmental regulation and ever-expanding suburbs are seeing farms disappear. Those that remain are forced to deal with the sometimes opposing demands of Government regulators, local councils and retailers.

In the face of these demands, hydroponic production offers a number of advantages. Minimising the use of land,

water and fertilizer, reduces the environmental 'footprint' of farming. Products can be grown in a relatively sterile environment, reducing chemical use and are guaranteed dirt free at harvest.

These advantages though are mostly concerned with the growing of the crop. Until now we have had very little knowledge about the effect on postharvest quality depending on whether the produce is grown from field cultivation or hydroponic systems.

A recent project facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG, funded by the National Vegetable Levy and voluntary contributions from Barden Produce and Industry and Investment NSW, compared

the two growing methods. The project examined the differences in quality and shelf life of Asian vegetables grown hydroponically and those conventionally grown in soil.

Five product lines – Buk Choy, Pak Choy, Choy Sum, Gai Lan and Coriander – grown hydroponically and in soil, were picked simultaneously from farms in the Sydney Basin on three different occasions between August and November 2009. They were bunched, packed and stored at 5°C for one week before evaluation of shelf life took place.

Significant differences were discovered in the shelf life of hydroponic compared to field grown vegetables. Although hydroponic products tended to

lose weight slightly more rapidly after harvest, this had little effect on acceptability compared to the onset of rots and disease. In most cases, hydroponically grown products outperformed those grown in soil.

The differences were most notable in Buk Choy and Pak Choy. For these products, leaf diseases were the main factor reducing shelf life. Disease developed rapidly in the field grown products, even where none was obvious at harvest. However, little or no disease was observed in hydroponic Pak Choy (figure 1) or Buk Choy.

Shelf life of Buk Choy almost tripled when grown hydroponically, while that of Pak Choy doubled (Figure 2). Leaf spots and rots were less of an issue for

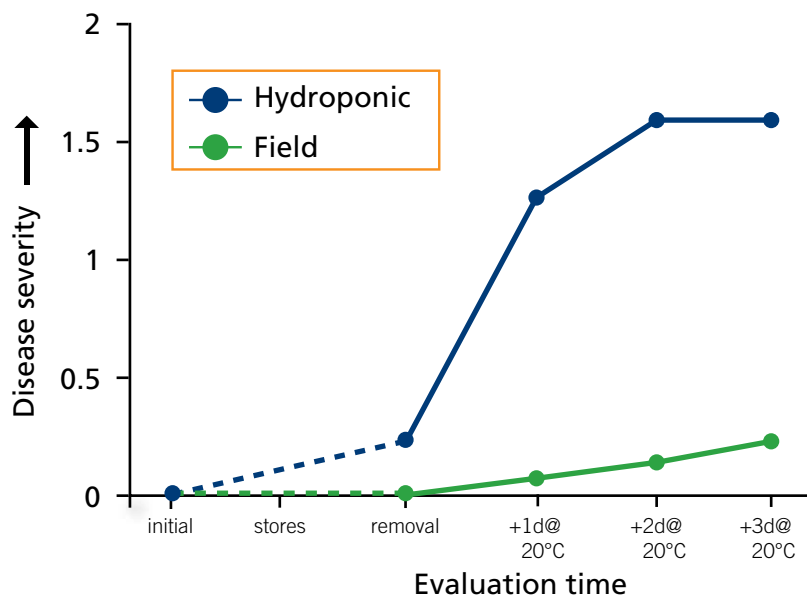


Figure 1 - Leaf and stem diseases in Pak Choy grown hydroponically or in soil, then stored for one week at 5°C before shelf life at 20°C.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Research project examines the differences in quality and shelf life of Asian vegetables, grown hydroponically compared to those conventionally grown in soil.
- Results show shelf life and quality are increased for Pak choy and Pak Choy if grown hydroponically.
- Field grown Gail Land did not even last a single day at 20°C.

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 Email: <allan@bardenproduce.com.au>
 Phone: 02 9764 4044

Choy Sum and in this case shelf life was similar between the two growing methods.

Gai Lan had a much shorter shelf life than the other products due to rapid leaf yellowing as well as the onset of leaf diseases

In these trials, field grown produce did not even last one day at 20°C, not enough for normal retail sale. Hydroponic production could therefore have a major benefit in providing consumers with good quality Gai Lan at the supermarket.

Hydroponics allows increased amounts of vegetables to be grown on a smaller area of land using less water and fertilizer than conventional farming. There are possibly major benefits for consumers, with clean, fresh vegetables grown practically in their own backyard, available for purchase. 🌱

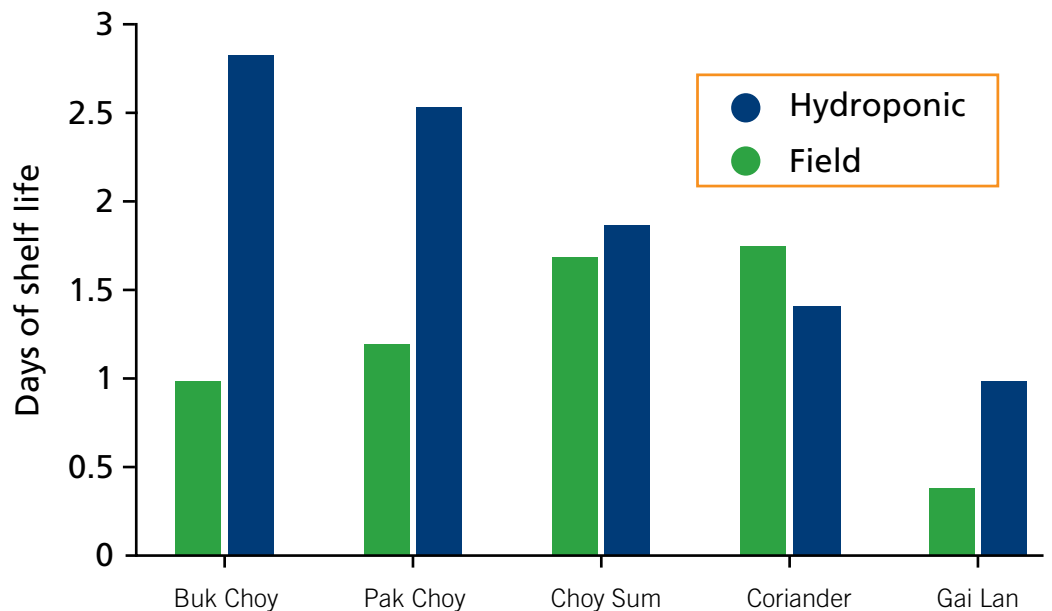


Figure 2 - Shelf life of hydroponic and field grown products stored for one week at 5°C before transfer to 20°C

Asian Vegetable Profile

Sin Qua

Luffa cylindrica and *Luffa acutangula*

Otherwise known as: Angled Luffa, Ridged Luffa, Silk Gourd, Chinese Okra

Background:

The Sin Qua plant originated in India but is now grown in many parts of the world. Although edible, one of its main commercial uses is as a shower 'Loofa'. Otherwise known as Angled Luffa it is named for its 10 strongly defined ridges that run the length of the exterior, which is narrow, green and elongated. When dried, the interior turns to fibrous matty material, making it marketable as a 'Loofa'.

Where and how does it grow?

Sin Qua should be picked while still immature, if it is to be eaten, to avoid it becoming fibrous and tough. It grows best in a warm climate and is available all year round.

Sin qua vines are usually planted in spring and grown up and across a trellis, not unlike a grape vine. The gourds hang below the foliage, making them easy to harvest. Sin quas are productive plants.

Preparation and cooking

Sin quas have a slightly spongy texture and mild flavour which has been likened by some to zucchinis. In preparation for cooking the hard ridges should be cut off. The rest of the skin can be left on if tender enough.

Sin qua oxidises quite quickly so it can be useful to add a little lemon juice if it is not going to be cooked immediately. It can then be steamed, stir fried, grated into an omelette or fritter or added to soup.



Sin qua is a good source of nutrients containing small amounts of calcium, phosphorus, iron and other micronutrients. It is not only a source of food though. Aside from the source from which 'Loofas' are made, sin qua also has other uses.

It has been used as a natural remedy for jaundice and in parts of South America, it, combined with other vegetable matter and recycled plastic has been used to create furniture and construct houses. 🌱

National Vegetable Levy



Information about the National Vegetable Levy

The Australian Vegetable Industry is confronted by numerous challenges and opportunities each year. The National Vegetable Levy enables the industry, through Research and Development, to improve production efficiency, product quality, sustainability, innovation, and the ability to supply and respond to market needs, as well as to find solutions to priority issues.

What is the National Vegetable Levy?

The National Vegetable Levy is a levy payable on selected vegetables which provides funding for research and development on behalf of industry and for plant health activities. The levy is payable on vegetables produced in Australia for either the domestic or export markets, and sold either by the producer, or used by the producer in the production of other goods. The current rate for the vegetable levy is 0.5 per cent of the vegetables' value at the point of sale.

What vegetables are not included in the levy?

Potatoes, onions and mushrooms have separate levy arrangements and are not included in the National Vegetable Levy. Tomatoes, asparagus, melons, seed sprouts and herbs (other than fresh culinary shallots and parsley) currently have no national levy arrangements.

How is the levy collected?

The levy is collected from the grower at the first point of sale. This is usually at a wholesale market or processing company. If it is a direct sale it is collected by the retailer. A producer who sells produce direct to consumers must submit the levy and returns directly to the Levies Revenue Service (LRS).

The levy is applicable to fresh and processed vegetables. The collected revenue is forwarded to the LRS, a unit in the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry that is responsible for collecting all agriculture levies.

In the case of the National Vegetable Levy, the majority of the revenue is forwarded to Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), an industry-owned company that coordinates, invests and manages research and development and promotional programs on behalf of Australia's horticulture levies. A small portion is forwarded to Plant Health Australia (PHA) to pay the industry's PHA membership.

Who decides how the levy is spent?

While HAL is responsible for managing industry funds and Australian Government matched funds, it is the industry's responsibility to advise how funds should be allocated. The Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) is a subcommittee of the HAL board. The IAC and the industry advisory group members are the key representatives who recommend to HAL what research and development projects should be funded by the National Vegetable Levy.

When is levy due for payment?

Quarterly Returns:

Quarterly returns with payment must be submitted to the LRS on or before the 28th day after the end of the March, June, September and December quarters. For example, the return and payment for the quarter ending 30 June, i.e. for the months of April, May and June, is due on or before 28 July.

Annual Returns:

The return is due together with payment on or before 28 August in the next levy year. For example, the return and payment for the 2009/2010 levy year must be lodged by 28 August 2010.

A first purchaser, buying agent, selling agent or exporter may apply for an exemption from the requirement to lodge quarterly returns for a levy (financial) year through the LRS if that person has reasonable grounds for believing that the total liability of levy/export charge payable for vegetables dealt with in the year will be less than \$500.

What is the record process?

People who lodge returns and people who pay levies to intermediaries are required to keep records supporting the information supplied in returns or information relating to payments made to intermediaries. These records are to be kept for a period of five years and are to be made available to LRS officers.

Are there any penalties for late payments or other offences?

Where a levy/export charge is paid late, a penalty will be payable at the rate of two per cent per month, compounding on the sum of the unpaid amounts, including penalties already accrued.

Penalties are also imposed for other breaches of the legislation.


Does the Goods and Service Tax (GST) apply to levies?

No. Australian Government levies administered by the LRS are exclusive of the GST. The levy is a separate calculation, exclusive of GST consideration.

Where do I lodge my return?

Send your completed returns and payments to:
The Secretary
Levies Revenue Service
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Locked Bag 4488
KINGSTON ACT 2604

What legislation is associated with the levy?

While this article may be used as a guide it does not substitute for the relevant legislation. Copies of the legislation applicable to funds can be obtained by visiting www.comlaw.gov.au 

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Confronting the Technology Monster

New report examines the impact of technology on the competitiveness of the Australian vegetable industry.

The success and growth of the Australian vegetable industry has always been dependent on its ability to adopt and adapt to new technologies. A new major report funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) in partnership with AUSVEG, titled: Opportunities and challenges faced with emerging technologies in the Australian vegetable industry aims to provide a broad review of current and emerging technologies and their affect on the competitiveness of the Australian vegetable industry.

Project Leader Dr Silvia Estrada-Flores, Principal Consultant of Food Chain Intelligence, has just released the first of five papers that will be developed during 2010. The focus of the first of these reports is on supply chain and logistics.

Lagging behind

What struck Dr Estrada-Flores in her research was the low rate of use, of computers and the internet in agricultural enterprises. "If we look at reports produced since the Howard Government, they all point to Australia having a good

level of uptake of ICTs (information and communication technologies)," she said. "The reality is that though Australia may be very good at retail [ICT] uptake, at an agricultural level, we are still lagging behind other sectors."

Current data shows that the percentage of horticultural farms using computers and the internet sits at 62% and 60% respectively. If technical advances are to add value to farm operations — whether it is optimising supply and demand or inventory management — it is essential that at least the very basics in computer and internet technologies are adopted.

Dr Estrada-Flores suggests the reason for such low usage of available technologies is because growers do not necessarily see a cost benefit in the uptake of supply chain technology. "Growers do not understand how the technologies can be integrated into and add value to their operations, which is why training and education is so important," she said.

For those growers who have already incorporated computers and the internet into their

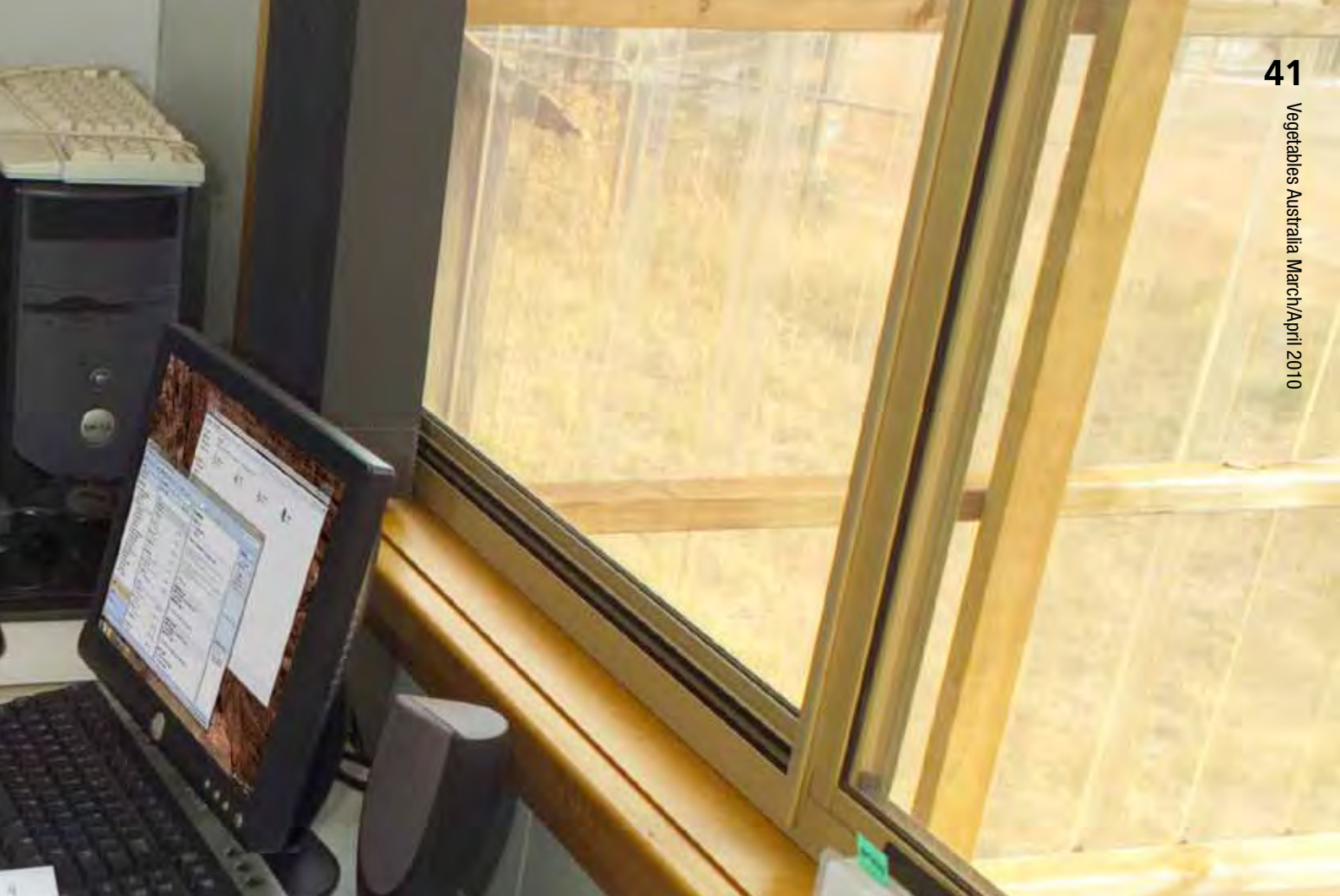
“ We need to increase the level of computer and internet uptake on farms at the very basic level. ”

operation, a significant amount of time is spent completing basic tasks such as finance management, accessing weather information or sending and receiving emails. Training and education on how ICTs can add value to a growers' business is needed to ensure the integration of these technologies for the purposes of monitoring, forecasting, procurement and supply chain collaboration.

Australia has a very active farm software industry. Approximately 650 products currently exist in the market, ranging in price from free of charge to over \$30,000. Thus there is no shortage of products that can be integrated and add value to a farm's operations. Such software systems have a variety of functions, and can be used to assist in a range of business applications, including cost management, budgeting and finance, traceability, inventory management, crop planning and sales.

Keeping Cool

While there is an indication that cold chain logistics is currently in the decline stage of techno-



logical development, the focus of R&D has now shifted from merely creating refrigerated equipment to creating integrated logistics systems. An example of this is the development of products such as the nanoskin material — a micron-thick film that acts as a thermal protection and can be applied during packaging production. This product significantly reduces the total weight of transport containers — potentially changing the way produce is transported. What this means for growers is that the reduced weight of transport containers can lead to an increase in its carrying capacity, which in turn reduces shipping costs.

Despite the abundance of current and emerging technologies that are relevant to the Australian vegetable industry, Dr Estrada-Flores sees two in particular that have the potential to change the industry. “In terms of immediate technologies, electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital pricing are the most relevant that can shape the [Australian] vegetable industry.”

E-commerce the key

While e-commerce as a technology is already in the mature stage of R&D, it is still in its infancy within the context of the Australian vegetable industry. Given the current low level of computer and internet uptake, there is great scope for e-commerce to change the business landscape by offering a completely new way for growers to do business.

E-commerce will allow growers new channels to sell their products, and reach new markets of potential customers that traditional channels do not allow. E-commerce portals such as FoodConnect and Realtime Markets allow growers to market their produce more cost effectively to domestic and international markets, as well as connecting local markets to local consumers.

Digital pricing allows retailers to change the price of products displayed on electronic shelf labels automatically through a central system. Using this technology, 10,000 labels can be updated in less than one hour. As pricing for vegetables

is heavily driven by supply and demand, digital pricing can improve pricing accuracy at the retailers' end by using real-time market information. While the benefits of digital pricing will remain mostly with the retailer, given the increasing trend in supermarkets around the world using digital pricing, it's essential the vegetable industry is aware of this shift and how it is shaping the retail sector.

The fundamental message to take from Dr Estrada-Flores' report 'Opportunities and challenges faced with emerging technologies in the Australian vegetable industry' is the importance of adopting basic computer and internet technologies at farm level. “The reason we do not have world-class supply chain networks in place right now is because we are not ready,” Dr Estrada-Flores said.

“We need to increase the level of computer and internet uptake on farms at the very basic level. This means offering training and education in using these technologies, before we can hope to have a world-class supply chain.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

- New report reviews the impact of existing and emerging technologies on the competitiveness of the Australian Vegetable Industry – focus on supply chain and logistics.
- Growers appear reluctant to take advantage of the benefits provided by computers and the internet.
- Training and education required to increase uptake of new technologies in order to improve supply chain.

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 Project numbers:
 VG08087
 Keywords:
 Emerging Technology



Nuffield Scholarship recipient Steve Newman

Investment in people = investment in industry

Nuffield Scholarship recipient Steve Newman is about to embark on a global study, he talks to Andrew White about the importance of people development and how he hopes to share his experiences with the industry when he returns.

Steve Newman is eager to learn new ways to do old business. A fourth generation vegetable grower from Gumeracha in South Australia, he manages the family business, Hills Fresh, with his father John. Together they grow lettuce, leek and cauliflower, which they plant twice a year on approximately 60 acres of land. Mr Newman departs for the United States this month to start a fact finding mission that will see him travel the globe — searching for innovative ways to reduce labour costs and to investigate best practices in automation and soil management — which he will then share with his peers in the industry. “The study topic I’m looking at is more of the mechanical labour saving ideas that we can pick up from around the world. Just to see how we fair compared to other countries,” Mr Newman said. “Most of it will probably be through Holland and Spain; vegetable farms where labour

is a little bit more expensive. I’m hoping to be able to see a lot more machinery that will be able to be adapted to our conditions and circumstances in Australia,” he said. Mr Newman is one of 18 Australians who received a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship last year. Scholars receive funding to travel overseas and research farming practices abroad. They are then encouraged to share their discoveries in ways which will contribute to the broader development of the industry. Industry development involves adapting vegetable growing businesses to make them more market driven. In the current climate though, no vegetable business is immune to the pressures of lower farm-gate prices, expanding import markets and rising input costs such as labour. “It is hard work at the moment. Prices aren’t super and we’ve just got to change with the times, which is difficult

and can also be expensive. But we are looking at new opportunities all the time,” Mr Newman said optimistically.

Going global

The Nuffield Global Focus tour, which begins in September this year, offers the opportunity to network with international scholars and Mr Newman plans to scope out a variety of vegetable growing operations. He aims to investigate new machines such as harvesting and packing equipment; anything that can make labour more effective and allow Australian vegetable growers to remain competitive internationally. “I think we will continue to be under pressure from further imports because of the labour expense that Australia has at the moment. “If I can bring back some ideas that we can bounce around the Australian industry... well, Australians are pretty good at adapting things,” said Mr Newman.

“If we can get together as growers and adapt other equipment to save on labour, that’s going to be a big thing in the future I think.” According to Mr Newman, improvement in the Australian industry will be dependant on advances in technology and science. “I think it’s a combination of mechanisation, better agronomy and any new technology that’s going to bring us higher and more even yields,” he said. By achieving more even yields, Mr Newman believes vegetable businesses can become more profitable. In tandem with his other passion, soil management, more even yields will make it easier to mechanically harvest on-farm - reducing the cost of labour. Growers want to be able to harvest crops like cauliflower and lettuce in a minimal number of passes. Through appropriate soil management, using composts and other means, and by utilising new automated harvesting

technologies, Mr Newman said he hopes to have yields that are generally more even, of a better quality and which are ultimately easier to harvest.

Mr Newman spoke at length about the value of grower tours to industry development, as they allowed growers to observe how other markets function and the logistics of overseas operations. "People that go on them learn so much. It opens your eyes to the world and they are something that the industry really needs to support."

Mr Newman expects to learn invaluable skills and gain leader-

technology to the industry.

I think the networking is going to be a lot better in the future than it has been in the past," he said.

"We need to make the jobs easier so they are more attractive to young people. So that the manual side of it is not as hard as it once was."

New breakthroughs in technology, mechanisation and soil management which make vegetable growing more accessible and more profitable may yet be the key.

Applications for the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships 2011 open on April 1 and close June 30. The Nuffield Farming Scholarships for vegetable growers are funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matching funds from the Australian Government. 



“ It’s a combination of mechanisation, better agronomy and any new technology that’s going to bring us higher and more even yields. ”

ship experience on his travels, which will last for at least 16 weeks.

Though uneasy to nominate himself as one of the South Australian industry’s bright young leaders, Mr Newman is aware of the responsibility such opportunities place on him.

"As a younger person the South Australian industry, I suppose I’d be one that was on that path (of becoming a leader)," Mr Newman said.

Future focus

The key to the future of the industry, Mr Newman believes, is to embrace greater accessibility, so that younger people will be attracted to the industry and so that the industry can retain the next generation of young growers coming through, rather than lose them to other occupations. "The young guys that are coming through are very forward, they want to go places and they want to bring new

 For more information about the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships visit www.nuffield.com.au/schols.html.
For more information contact:
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What is Industry Development?

The Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP), which commenced in August last year, aims to adapt research outcomes and new knowledge and make it relevant to growers’ businesses and the broader industry. The goal is to make growing businesses more market driven.

The concept of industry development though, is often misunderstood. A clear definition of industry development and its role within the vegetable industry is usually instructive.

In July 2008, HAL released a set of Guidelines and Tools which defined industry development as: "The process of informing and empowering those in horticulture to make better business decisions."

Under the VIDP, which will continue to be rolled out this year, industry development is characterised by services that empower those involved in horticulture to make better, more informed business decisions. It is hoped this will lead to an expansion of industry capacity through the development of people and institutions.

The VIDP has set about achieving its goal by way of six sub-programs, each with specific goals to improve particular areas of the vegetable industry. These programs were profiled in detail in Volume 5.3 of this magazine.

People development opportunities such as the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship showcase the concept of industry development in practice.

R&D project preview

Quantifying the effects of no till vegetable farming and organic mulch on greenhouse gas emissions and soil carbon.

Project number: VG09138

Start date: 30/09/2009

End date: 30/11/2012

Project leader: Dr Gordon Rogers, AHR Environmental

Email: gordon@ahr.com.au

Phone: + 61 418 51 7777 or 02 8627 1040

This project will quantify the effect of vegetable farming practices on the sequestration/emission of carbon and N₂O from intensively cropped soils.

Agriculture has been identified as a major polluter responsible for 16% of total greenhouse gas emissions. According to early research into the issue conducted by AHR Environmental vegetable growing is likely to be releasing between 236,900 and 370,800 t of carbon per year and significant amounts of N₂O associated with high nitrogen fertilizer use. There is


an urgent need to develop mitigation techniques and quantify impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and soil carbon if the consequences of complacency are to be averted.

AHR has developed sustainable no-till vegetable cropping systems and these may have potential for producing vegetable crops with minimal or even negative CO₂ and N₂O emissions. A modest 1% increase in organic carbon in the top 10cm of soil equates to the sequestration of 37 t/ha carbon. AHR now has access to a portable field laboratory

which can measure CH₄ and N₂O emissions (gas chromatography) and CO₂ (IRGA) directly from soils in-situ in the field.

Farming practices involve combinations of no-tillage, use of crop residues as organic mulches, nitrogen fertiliser management, and irrigation practices. The project will build on previous research conducted by AHR into the development of no-tillage vegetable production systems involving the use of in-situ organic mulches. The project will evaluate the effect of no-tillage and residue mulching on soil carbon in intensively

managed vegetable soils.

The project will strengthen project VG09142 by providing the project team with data which quantifies the effects of no-till vegetable farming and organic mulches on the net soil CO₂ and N₂O emissions or sequestration which can then be incorporated into the carbon foot printing tool they will be developing as part of that project. This strengthens the tool because it will be able to quantify the greenhouse emissions of sustainable farming systems, not just conventional vegetable farming practices. 



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The Northern

Industry economist Ian James looks at the potential for horticultural development in Northern Australia, writes Ian James.

The Northern Myth was the name given to a book written in 1965 by a noted agricultural economist, Bruce Davidson. In June 2007, in response to the continuing drought in eastern Australia and ongoing water problems in the Murray-Darling basin, the Howard Government decided to establish the Northern Australian Land and Water Taskforce. Its brief was to examine the feasibility of large scale agricultural development in Australia's north.

In September 2008 the Rudd Government broadened the terms of reference and changed the membership. The area the taskforce was asked to examine, covered 120 million hectares and stretched from an area north of Cairns across to Broome. The final report of the taskforce has been released.

Intuitively this area would seem well suited for agricultural development due to the abundance of water. The average annual rainfall is 1,077,000 ggalitres (1 billion litres). This is equivalent to eight and a half times the annual runoff in the Murray-Darling Basin, or 100 times the capacity of Lake Argyle, the dam for the Ord river scheme in Western Australia. Despite this huge volume of

water the Taskforce argued that 'the north can be described as being water limited.' This paradox arises they argued because:

- Rainfall was seasonal and for six months of the year there is virtually no rain.
- The rain falls mainly on the coastal plain and flows quickly to the sea. Little rain falls in the upper reaches of streams and rivers making it difficult to capture, unlike the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Large storages would be required but the topography of the area provides few reasonable sites.
- Evaporation rates are extremely high and only 20% of the rainfall enters the streams and rivers.

They concluded that the north could never be a major food bowl because neither public nor private sector cost effectiveness criteria could justify the high cost of capturing and storing surface water. They argued that the best option was the use of groundwater to sustain more extensive agricultural activity.

The Push for Northern Development

The report is bound to be controversial but controversy is

nothing new for mass irrigation schemes. Ever since the Chaffey brothers set out to develop irrigated farms along the Murray River at Mildura and Renmark in response to the drought of 1877-84, irrigation schemes have aroused great passion and political controversy. Inevitably these schemes in Australia have involved the government either in the initial stages of

or another example of 'wasteful' government expenditure.

Irrigating northern Australia has been part of this passion and controversy. Davidson's book, *The Northern Myth*, was a key element. It was written at the time when substantial amount of taxpayers' money was being poured in to develop the Ord River Scheme in the Kimberley area of Western Australia. His

“ The industry needs well trained visionaries with leadership skills and a clear understanding of the economic, market and development opportunities facing the industry. ”

development or as a bail out. As a consequence, large scale irrigation schemes are seen either as nation building projects that should be supported by taxpayers in the national interest

conclusions in 1965 were not too dissimilar to the Taskforce Report of 2010. He concluded that intensive agriculture could be more cheaply produced in Australia's temperate zones and

Myth

Photo provided by Northern Land and Water Taskforce

that northern Australia was unsuited to intensive agriculture and best suited to large scale cattle farms.

Despite the release of the report, we are unlikely to have heard the end of the push for northern development. The Australian newspaper in its editorial on the release of the report argued that 'if the nation is to transform its size and economic base to the next stage, the challenge for this decade is to think laterally and look north.' Writing in the more popular Murdoch press, Andrew Bolt, lamented the anti development bias of the taskforce: 'And to those still with dreams to build great things I say only: leave' (Australia) he wrote.

And then added, pressure is mounting for a Senate Inquiry into the issue.

Are there lessons for the vegetable industry in this current debate? Most certainly yes. Vegetable growers are quiet achievers. But the focus of development and agriculture is changing rapidly. The industry needs well trained visionaries with leadership skills and a clear understanding of the economic, market and development opportunities facing the industry. The Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) aims to assist

this development. At the same time the industry needs to fight for its right to farm. We can take from the likely ongoing debate on this issue the following points.

Firstly, it is essential that the vegetable industry be involved in any debate about irrigation. Water is essential for vegetable growing and almost all vegetable farms use irrigation. There are already vegetable farms in the North. Their current rights and access to water need to be protected against any anti agricultural sentiment which may prevail.

Secondly, the industry needs to assess whether it should support the opening of new tracts of land for vegetable growing. Existing vegetable growing regions can already provide enough vegetables to meet demand. In many regions further expansion is only limited by inadequate returns. Focusing on improving infrastructure in existing vegetable growing districts is likely to lead to greater returns to growers than moving north.


Thirdly, the industry needs to be wary about arguments for expansion based on population growth. Arguments for expansion cannot be divorced from costs, especially the increasing

cost of water. Vegetable growers are businesses not charitable organisations and growth without profitability is a swim to the bottom. Markets and our ability to compete in them remain critical.

Fourthly, in order to be taken seriously, we need to understand the demands of competing industries. In the report there was constant reference to other industries and their water needs. Northern Australia has built a lucrative industry centred on environmental tourism which has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Any argument for development of agriculture will have to prove that the expansion can occur without too much harm to the economics of other industries.

Finally, we could do well to take a leaf out of the "Northern Myth" In any of these debates a holistic approach is required. Davidson's strength as an agricultural economist was his ability to combine knowledge of farming practices with a full understanding of the economic factors that make for successful agricultural businesses. The problem of developing the north is not only water. There are a host of other complicating economic factors. Inadequate infrastructure, distance from

markets, pest and disease problems, high labour and other input costs are all critical in delivering adequate returns to growers.

Moving north may not be the answer but the idea does provide food for thought. 

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Final report into the feasibility of large scale agricultural development in Australia's north released.
- Concludes that the north is unsuitable to become a major food bowl because of the high cost of capturing and storing surface water, but debate continues.
- Report contains similar information to that first published in 1965 by noted agricultural economist, Bruce Davidson.
- Vegetable growers urged to understand the various issues arising from the debate.

Victoria



In recent years, Victoria's vegetable industry has shown strong support to all campaigns that promote children's consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. In 2007, the Federal Government announced, high sugar content drinks should not be supplied to school food services and pushed for fruit and vegetables as part of a school canteen menu.

School canteens play an important role in the provision of food to students and the school community as well as being an integral part of the school environment. The school canteen should reflect the

educational goals of the school and support and complement student learning.

When it is used daily, the food provided through the school canteen may comprise a third of a student's total daily intake and have a significant influence on their health and nutrition. Today, many Victorian schools have introduced their own vegetable garden as part of the school curriculum. This opens the doors for our industry to embrace such programs and offer our growers as mentors or teachers in terms of educating children about the 'finer' points of vegetable production.

Victorian growers are the perfect ambassadors for the industry in terms of promoting healthy eating and highlighting the joys behind consuming what they grow. Food for thought!

In other news, the rains in

February were crucial but unfortunately not sufficient enough to fix the water supply problem currently being experienced by the Bacchus Marsh vegetable growers.

Bacchus Marsh growers, as an area group, have approached the State Minister with representation from local council and state member voicing their concerns about the lack of water availability.

Production of fresh produce cannot exist without constant availability of a water supply and Southern Rural Water must deliver better outcomes for all growers in this area than what has previously existed. The Water Industry Forum project must deliver water now, not later.

We have now completed the new phase of the webpage development that provides a

new concept of advertising for our industry associates to advertise their business, products and services to the vegetable industry. Take a look at www.vegetablesvictoria.com.au or visit www.vgavic.org.au

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Tasmania



After the recent announcement by McCain's to close the vegetable plant at Smithton the State Government organised a taskforce to look at immediate and future strategies to assist those who will be affected.. From the outset the Tasmanian Farmer Graziers Association (TFGA) has been involved with the McCain community taskforce.

The TFGA Vegetable Council was satisfied with the State Government announcement that it will be providing nearly \$1 million dollars to action the McCain community taskforce immediate priorities. From the 11 priorities funded the TFGA was successful in seeking funding for the following:

- Engaging a full time facilitator to stimulate the Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan 2001-12;
- Undertake a cost comparison of the Tasmanian vegetable production with New Zealand

and the European Union;

- Funding towards grants for effected farmers; and
- Employ an additional rural financial counsellor for the Tasmanian Rural Counselling Service.

The funding by the State Government will provide assistance to growers affected by McCain's closure. It will assist to look at future alternatives, look at strategies for the future growth of the Tasmanian vegetable industry through and promotion and marketing.

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Western Australia



vegetablesWA

The start of 2010 has been extremely hectic for vegetablesWA and the Potato Growers Association. In addition to usual business, activities have included scoping funding opportunities, liaising with stakeholders and submitting responses on various national issues of importance.

One such issue that has potential to greatly affect growers is the review by the APVMA, of current Fruit Fly eradication techniques. In West Australia, Mediterranean fruit fly can cause significant damage in crops such as tomatoes, capsicum, chilli and cucurbits.

These crops are treated so that they are eligible for export to markets which do not already have Mediterranean fruit fly. The need for alternatives to current methods has become urgent and no alternative has yet to prove economically viable. They include the possible use of irradiation, methyl bromide and heat/cold treatment.

vegetablesWA representatives attended a conference in January which was facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG, and funded by the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government, to investigate existing research into alternatives and to develop a strategy to address this issue.

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AROUND THE STATES

New South Wales



Following the National Chemical Review, the Association has provided a submission to the National Scheme for Assessment, Registration and Control of Use of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals which raised the following points:

- The Association strongly opposes any pesticide regulation which further erodes the right of farmers to use agricultural chemicals, and additional regulatory or restrictive controls on chemicals once they have satisfied the registration requirements of the APVMA.
- The needs of chemical users vary from region to region and with the production systems in place. A national framework needs a mechanism where chemical users can provide feedback about the operation

of the system, and reflect the diversity of the stakeholders the framework deals with.

- In order to develop streamlined re-accreditation processes, a point system for users to undertake re-accreditation similar to systems used by Certified Practising Accountants and Doctors using paper based check audit systems should be introduced.
- The regulatory body needs to look at international advances in practices to ensure Australia's registration system and the associated costs are in line with international best practice.
- Competency based training is an integral part of chemical use to ensure that chemicals are applied safely and in a manner which minimises harm to the environment and complies with commodity quality assurance systems.
- The Association recommends working with colleagues in major agricultural producing countries, such as the United States for

AgVet chemical data and risk assessment details so as to enhance current processes and efficiency of chemical assessments.

Orchard Exclusion Netting
The Association has written to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries seeking a commitment from the NSW Government to finalise the perennial issue of flying-fox culling in NSW, through the provision of financial assistance to orchardists to implement orchard exclusion netting.

The proposal is that growers in a defined area known as the Sydney Basin be paid a grant of \$20,000 per hectare, upon their commitment to construct full exclusion netting. In return, the industry will avoid culling as a management tool.

There is support for the proposal from animal welfare, scientific and environment groups as well as from affected growers. The proposed grant offsets about

half of the cost of constructing netting. The balance plus ongoing liabilities for maintenance and depreciation will be the concern of growers. The Association estimates that the scheme is unlikely to exceed a total cost to the Government of \$9 million.

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NSW Farmers' Association Horticulture Committee
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Queensland



The Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce report: the sustainability of agricultural development in Northern Australia, has concluded that transforming the region into a major food bowl without further research would fail to be economically viable.

It has also dismissed the idea that dams would be able to supply additional water requirements for the dry season, favouring instead the sustainable use of available groundwater resources. Growcom agrees with the report's conclusions that more research needs to be done to ensure agricultural expansion, in northern Australia or anywhere, is approached with care, governed by knowledge of the suitability of crops, both

climatically and economically, addressing sustainability issues and supported by necessary infrastructure including all weather roads, access to reliable water supplies and viable markets.

While not acknowledged by the report, major horticultural crops already thrive in northern Australia. These include pumpkins, potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, mangoes, tropical fruit and melons. Horticulture is also a major employer and driver of the regional economy.

Returns on investment of precious water are higher in horticulture than for most other crops or enterprises: an estimated \$1800 for vegetables for each megalitre of water used, \$1500 for fruit, and \$900 for grapes. Given government commitment to the continuation of programs such as Rural Water Use Efficiency 4 (in Queensland) and the Reef Rescue program, growers would continue to have incentives to use available seasonal water on their farms at optimum

efficiency, maintaining water quality and controlling runoff. Once again, the report highlights the need for a national food security plan in order to conserve and expand areas which are already successfully producing fresh produce for Australian tables and export dollars overseas. With forecasts of a vastly increased Australian and global populations by 2050, solutions are required.

Australia is one of the few countries in the world with the capacity to feed its own population from its own land and feed them well. With vision we can continue to have this global advantage and be well placed to help feed the world in the years ahead.

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continued over page ►

South Australia



With the State Election called for the 20th March, Grow SA along with other key industry stakeholders have developed a detailed policy paper and circulated it to all politicians and State Political Parties.

The key issues include;

WATER SECURITY: Critical water needs for the production of food to supply South Australia must be addressed alongside water for the environment and Critical Human Needs.

FOOD LABELLING: Product Standards and/or Codes of Practice relating to food labeling must be developed; Programs must be promoted to ensure consumers are able to identify

and support locally produced produce. The Government must ensure 'Country of Origin' labeling requirements are better policed.

BIOSECURITY: The Plant Health section within Department of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia must be retained, upgraded and adequately resourced as a critical step to protect the \$1.1 billion South Australian food sector.

TAXATION: The total elimination of payroll tax for the horticulture sector; exemption from land tax for land used for primary production and the elimination of Stamp Duty on all transactions relating to horticultural production, processing and marketing.

Additional industry issues identified within the paper include;

R&D: Requiring the maintenance of effective state based R&D capabilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Requiring new strategies to establish the infrastructure required to support the highest level of local food production and supply within South Australia.

PLANNING – RIGHT TO FARM: Requiring the development of a Planning Advisory Group to assist with the identification and protection of the necessary land to ensure food production and supply is secured for the future.

HEALTH: Requiring the allocation of \$1 million per year for the next five years to maximise the 'Go for 2 & 5' program and other similar industry-based programs.

WORKFORCE: Requiring the development of government and Industry partnerships to ensure viable workforce planning and

development

ENVIRONMENT: Requiring the joint development of a South Australia based Horticulture Environmental Stewardship Program.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2010

16 - 21 May

Ninth Annual Produce Executive Program

Mt Eliza Centre for Executive Education, Mt Eliza, Victoria

For more information:

Email: Program Manager Anita Pike at apike@streamwise.com.au

September 2010

8 – 10 September

Asia Fruit Logistica 2010

Hong Kong

For more information:

Website: www.asiafruitlogistica.com

27 - 30 May

AUSVEG National Convention 2010

Includes announcement of the 2010 AUSVEG National Award Winners for Excellence on 29 May.

Conrad Jupiters Hotel Casino, Gold Coast, Queensland

For more information:

Phone: AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098

June 2010

8-10 June

Growing Leaders Program 2010—Second Residential

Melbourne, Victoria

For more information:

Phone: Jill Briggs at Rural Training Initiatives on 0409 455 710

August 2010

31 August – 2 September

Growing Leaders Program 2010—Third Residential

Canberra, ACT

For more information:

Phone: Jill Briggs at Rural Training Initiatives on 0409 455 710



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