

vegetables

australia

May/June 2010

From little things,
big things grow

Eric Jacometti



Richard Mulcahy
One year on

Celebrating Vegetables
Mum was right

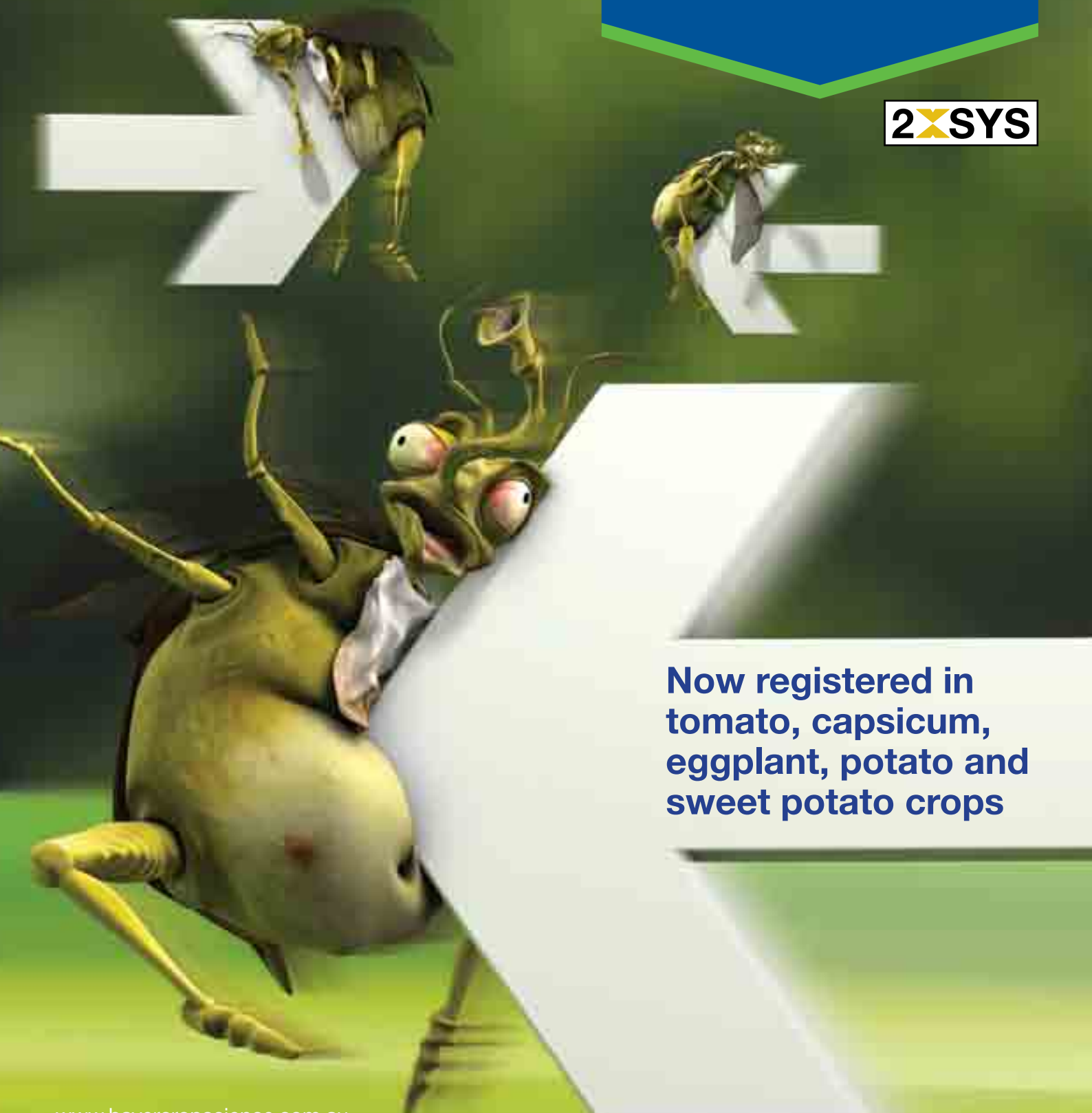
AUSVEG National Convention
Industry to converge on the Gold Coast

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Inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence



Newly announced speaker

Greg Davis - General Manager Fresh Produce - Coles



Newly announced speaker

Sarah Pettitt - Director, Family Farm Vegetable Producer
& Chairman NFU Board for Horticulture & Potatoes



Newly announced speaker

Glenn McGrath - Former Australian Cricketer

27 - 30 May 2010

Jupiters Hotel-Casino on the Gold Coast

For further information, please contact AUSVEG on 03 9544 8098 or email
convention@ausveg.com.au

vegetables australia

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▶ FRONT COVER:

Co-owner and Director of
Boमारoo Nurseries
Eric Jacometti

Photo by James Cunningham

A word from the AUSVEG Chairman

It is with great anticipation that we count down these final days to the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence, to be held at Jupiters Hotel-Casino on the Gold Coast from 27 - 30 May.

The team at AUSVEG have done a tremendous job to organise what will be a truly world class event. The Convention will feature a first class speaker line-up, a large horticulture focused trade show and a social program that will allow growers and industry members to network extensively.

The attendance of Elders ambassador and former Australian Cricketer Glenn McGrath is certain to be a Convention highlight.

Glenn McGrath will be our special guest at the 'Women in Horticulture' breakfast, an event which will raise funds for the McGrath Foundation.

The Foundation undertakes extraordinary work in helping to place breast care nurses in rural and regional communities throughout Australia. This provides vital support and care to women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. The breakfast is being held on the morning of Saturday 29 May and it will recognise the significant contributions made by women in the vegetable industry.

Other notable speakers at the Convention will be: Mr Greg Davis, General Manager of Fresh Produce at Coles; former Australian footballer, Mr Robert DiPierdomenico, who will be our MC at various events during the Convention; former Governor-General Major-General Michael Jeffery; Mr David Hughes, Group General Manager Commercial from Plant and Food Research New Zealand; and Independent Senator Nick Xenophon.

Growers are set to benefit from an enormous trade show, with a diverse range of exhibitors and leaders in agribusiness set to attend.

Growers are also encouraged to register to attend the industry's National Awards for Excellence, which are being held on the night of Saturday 29 May. The gala evening will highlight the achievements of our industry's most successful members and will recognise contributions from people right throughout the supply chain.

The AUSVEG National Convention will be an event not to be missed. If you have not filled out a registration form it is still not too late. Please go to the AUSVEG website at: www.ausveg.com.au/convention or contact AUSVEG directly on (03) 9822 0388.

My board of directors and I look forward to seeing you there.



John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG



CEO Message

By the time you're reading this edition of *Vegetables Australia*, AUSVEG will have reviewed the 2010 Federal Budget, and carefully considered its implications for vegetable growers.

We will also have reviewed the recommendations of the Henry Tax Review, after AUSVEG was allowed unprecedented access to the report in a special pre-release lock-up.

As we move into the new financial year, AUSVEG will play a greater role in engaging decision-makers through a new public affairs program, so that the interests of vegetable growers are given greater priority by government.

This will be achieved with the support of our strategic partners and sponsors, as well the support of Australian growers at the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence, which will take place this month from

27-30 May, at Jupiters Hotel-Casino on the Gold Coast.

Australian growers make significant contributions to our national economy and our way of life. Growers are ambassadors for a healthy lifestyle and are leaders in best practice farming and sustainable horticulture.

AUSVEG will strive to give our growers a greater voice and ensure their interests are considered in relation to the formation of free trade agreements and other legislation in the future.

We will campaign on the issues that are important to vegetable growers such as labour market issues and the challenges coming from global markets.

AUSVEG will also continue to work closely with Plant Health Australia and the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to stay abreast of all issues concerned with biosecurity. This

will ensure developments that may pose a threat to growers' viability are understood and managed quickly and effectively.

In addition to meeting with the Secretary of DAFF and other senior departmental officials, AUSVEG has recently held talks with the CEO of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and key industry suppliers, ensuring growers' concerns are understood when matters that affect them, both in the short and long term, are considered.

It has now been one year since I was appointed to the position of CEO. I am proud of what AUSVEG has been able to achieve in that time, but acknowledge that there are still many challenges ahead. Moving forward, AUSVEG will continue to approach these challenges with vigour, giving growers a stronger, louder and more united voice on the issues that affect them the most.



Richard J Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG



Pg 16 Inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence

Pg 22 Richard Mulcahy: One year on



Pg 40 Growers on tour

Editorial

The consumer's desire for a healthy lifestyle and the increasing effect of this on their purchasing behaviour presents an opportunity for the vegetable industry to capitalise at the retail level.

The industry is poised to take advantage of these dietary and lifestyle issues, if it can develop strategies that better convey its messages and promote the health benefits of vegetable consumption.

Though the general health

benefits of vegetables are well known, opportunities remain to increase consumption through exploring how these benefits affect consumer's purchasing decisions.

Addressing this issue is one of the major challenges confronting the vegetable industry and in this edition of *Vegetables Australia* we profile the industry's Domestic Market Development Strategy (DMDS), which includes a program specifically based on better

promotion of the health benefits of vegetables. See page 30 for future outcomes that hope to engage consumers with a new way of disseminating this traditional message.

Understanding how food labeling regulations work is also important to the healthy lifestyle issue. Jenny Jobling's article on page 46 provides an overview of the labeling situation, including the information that is currently permitted on labels of vegetable products and how changing

regulations will affect the industry.

For domestic vegetable producers, it is a matter of great concern that consumers are increasing their vegetable consumption through purchasing Australian grown vegetables and thus ensuring the future survival of our industry. On page eight we profile an industry initiative that is driving the Australian grown message and promoting locally grown produce.

Eric Jacometti, Co-owner and
Director of Boomaroo Nurseries

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in sweet corn



Meet the new members of
the Vegetable IAC

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New symbol of support for Australian vegetable growers

Australian vegetable growers are 'sowing seeds' for their future with a new logo and a national advertising campaign launched last month which promotes locally grown produce.

Led by Tasmanian farmers who grow vegetables for one of Australia's leading frozen food brands, Birds Eye, a new logo has been designed to make it easier for shoppers to instantly know that the food they buy is Australian grown.

Vegetable processor Simplot will label its Birds Eye frozen vegetables 'Grown in Australia' and feature pictures of Tasmanian farmers under the joint marketing venture.

The news comes as a welcome boost for both consumers trying to find and decipher information on packs, as well as the Australian vegetable industry, which is facing increased competition from imports.

Mr Terry O'Brien, Managing Director of Birds Eye said that a Newspoll survey undertaken last month clearly showed that Australian

consumers want to support Australian farmers.

"According to the results nine in ten Australians say they prefer to buy frozen vegetables that come from Australia," Mr O'Brien said.

"The survey also revealed that overwhelmingly the most important reason why Australian's want to buy locally grown vegetables is to support Australian farmers."

The new Birds Eye packs feature a logo which makes it instantly clear that the peas, beans, carrots or corn is grown in Australia. **va**



Nuffield scholarships open

Vegetable growers are being urged to apply for a Nuffield Farming scholarship.

Vegetable growers with a passion for their industry's future have been urged to apply for a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship. Applications are now open and need to be submitted before 30 June 2010 to be considered. The

scholarship is set to commence in 2011.

The scholarship assists growers to investigate issues they believe are crucial to improving farm performance and profitability. The scholarship, aimed at

primary producers aged 28 to 40 (approximately), is valued at \$28,000 and includes a six-week Global Focus Program travelling overseas on a guided tour, and up to 10 weeks of individual travel to investigate a topic of the recipients choice.

Application forms and more information are available from Nuffield Australia on (03) 5480 0755, via enquiries@nuffield.com.au or from www.nuffield.com.au. **va**

Understanding carbon

Growers are set to develop skills in regards to carbon footprinting, in a new training program designed specifically for the Australian vegetable Industry.

Australian vegetable growers will learn new skills under a program titled 'Understanding Carbon', a training program that has been designed especially for the Australian vegetable industry.

It is envisaged that the training will give growers a clearer understanding of carbon footprinting: what it means to them and how they can prepare

for carbon accounting, including the benefits of carbon accounting for their business.

Growers will also be taught about the changes they can make to ensure their farm and business become more sustainable. The training package will provide growers with links to resources and give them access to other avenues for obtaining further advice and

assistance.

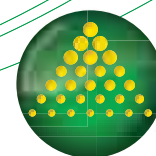
'Understanding Carbon' is being run by Arris Pty Ltd and is supported by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

The training will be delivered online, via scheduled webinars, and in person at workshops in each State. The webinars have been developed as a lead-in to the introduction of a carbon calculator, designed specifically

for the vegetable industry, which will be released later this year. **va**

i To find out when a workshop will be held in your state, and for a full list of webinars, visit www.arris.com.au

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WA growers hit by hail storm

Vegetable growers in Western Australia have suffered significant crop damage after a freak hail storm swept through the state in late March.



Hail stones



Hail damaged crops

The storm which arrived without warning, was over in minutes but resulted in many growers experiencing total crop loss in some commodities and over two months of reduced production.

Andrew Bogdanich, a third generation grower based north of Perth in West Gingin, said he had never experienced a storm like the one which hit on 22 March. "I've been growing for almost 27 years and I've never seen anything like it, it came out of nowhere and caught us all by surprise," he said.

Mr Bogdanich and his brother Michael, own and manage a 250 hectare property which produces different varieties of lettuce, cabbages, celery and cauliflower.

The farm's cos lettuce crop was completely wiped out.

majority of cos lettuce to local markets and so the effect on consumers was quite significant."

Mr Bogdanich explained that it would be still a few weeks until they were operating at 100 per cent production, but they were getting on with business. "It's just one of those things that happens, we just have to move on and get on with it," he said. "We've got staff to keep in work and we've managed to limit the affect on them as much as possible."

"Luckily we've had some good weather over the last month, with warm temperatures and no heavy rains which has helped in the replanting of crops,"

Mr Bogdanich said. vegetablesWA Executive Officer, Jim Turley, said that the hail storm was a 'catastrophic

“We've got staff to keep in work and we've managed to limit the effect on them as much as possible.”

They also suffered damage to celery and cabbage crops, with some produce able to be salvaged by selling as second grade produce or to processors. According to Mr Bogdanich it caused a considerable price spike with imported lettuces from the eastern states fetching as much as \$50 per crate after the storm, compared to \$28 on the day before it hit.

"The market was at its peak before the storm and because the state has limited local suppliers it had quite a large effect," he said.

"We and another grower, who were also affected, supply the

disaster' for the areas of Carabooda and West Gingin. "Millions of dollars have been lost, particularly in lettuce, celery, tomatoes and to a lesser extent cabbage. As a consequence of this, the local retail market has risen substantially for those products concerned," he said. While consumers have seen the price of lettuce rise from \$1.50 to as much as \$5.00, for growers the financial damage has been difficult to estimate.

"We're replanting every day so it's hard to put an exact figure on the losses but they would be significant,"

Mr Bogdanich said. **va**



Lightning-powered farming may just be the future

New research coming out of Japan claims mushrooms and some vegetable commodities multiply rapidly when struck by lightning.

New research coming out of Japan claims that mushrooms and some vegetables multiply rapidly when struck by lightning.

A traditional belief held by many Japanese farmers that plentiful mushroom harvests tend to follow thunderstorms may indeed prove correct.

Researchers at Iwate University in northern Japan have released findings that show some mushrooms more than double their yields when jolted by electricity.

The study reached its conclusions after four years of bombarding mushrooms with artificially induced lightning. Ten varieties of mushroom were tested, and eight of those species responded by growing at an increased rate when electrified. The fungi reacted best when exposed to between 50,000 and 100,000

volts for one ten-millionth of a second.

As for why the mushrooms multiply when powered by lightning, researchers can only hypothesise at this point. But it's possible the mushrooms are giving themselves a reproductive boost in response to danger, said Yuichi Sakamoto, one of the study's chief researchers. Initially, the mushrooms are damaged by the electrical bursts, but they compensate quickly by increasing protein and enzyme secretion.

The prospects are so good that the Iwate team is already testing to see whether other crops also respond to lightning in the same way. So far, radish, rapeseed plants, beans, and some varieties of lily are showing signs of increased production. **va**

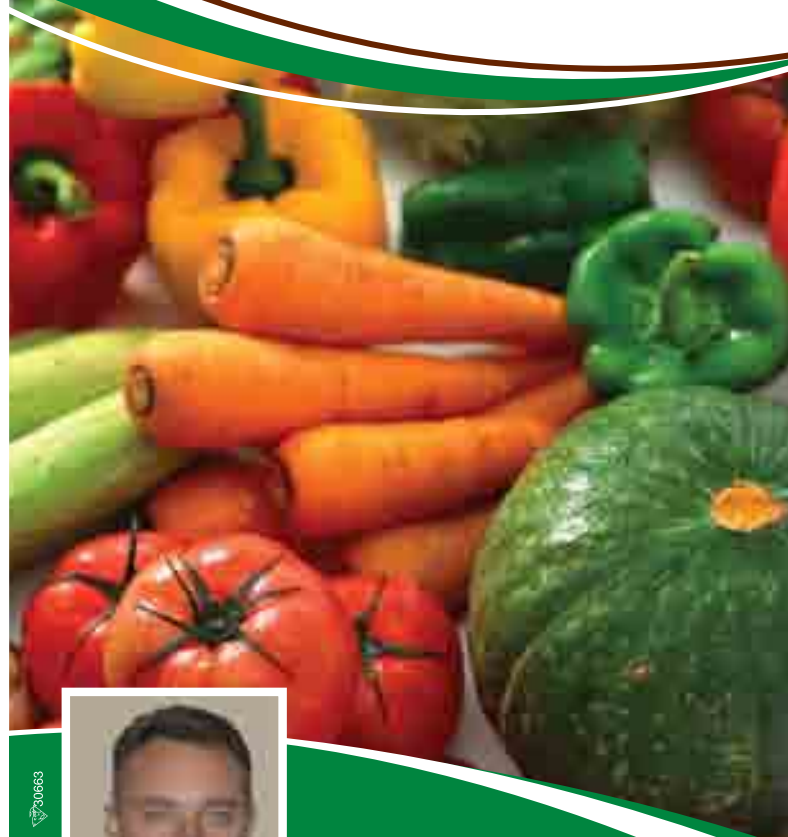
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*Mr. Glen McDonald –
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How the vegetable levy works

Understanding how the National Vegetable Levy works is imperative for growers.

The National Vegetable Levy is collected by the Levies Revenue Service (LRS) — an agency within the Australian Government’s Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) — and is matched dollar-for-dollar by the Australian Government.

Levy funds are managed by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), an industry-owned company that coordinates and invests research and development (R&D) levy funds on behalf of Australia’s horticulture industry.

A common misconception is that levy funds are distributed by peak industry representative bodies such as AUSVEG, but this is not the case. AUSVEG’s involvement in the investment of levy funds is limited to its recommendations to HAL about the composition of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC).

As the national peak industry body representing vegetable growers, AUSVEG is responsible for ensuring that the skills required to serve on the committee are met by the

“A common misconception is that levy funds are distributed by peak industry representative bodies such as AUSVEG, but this is not the case.”

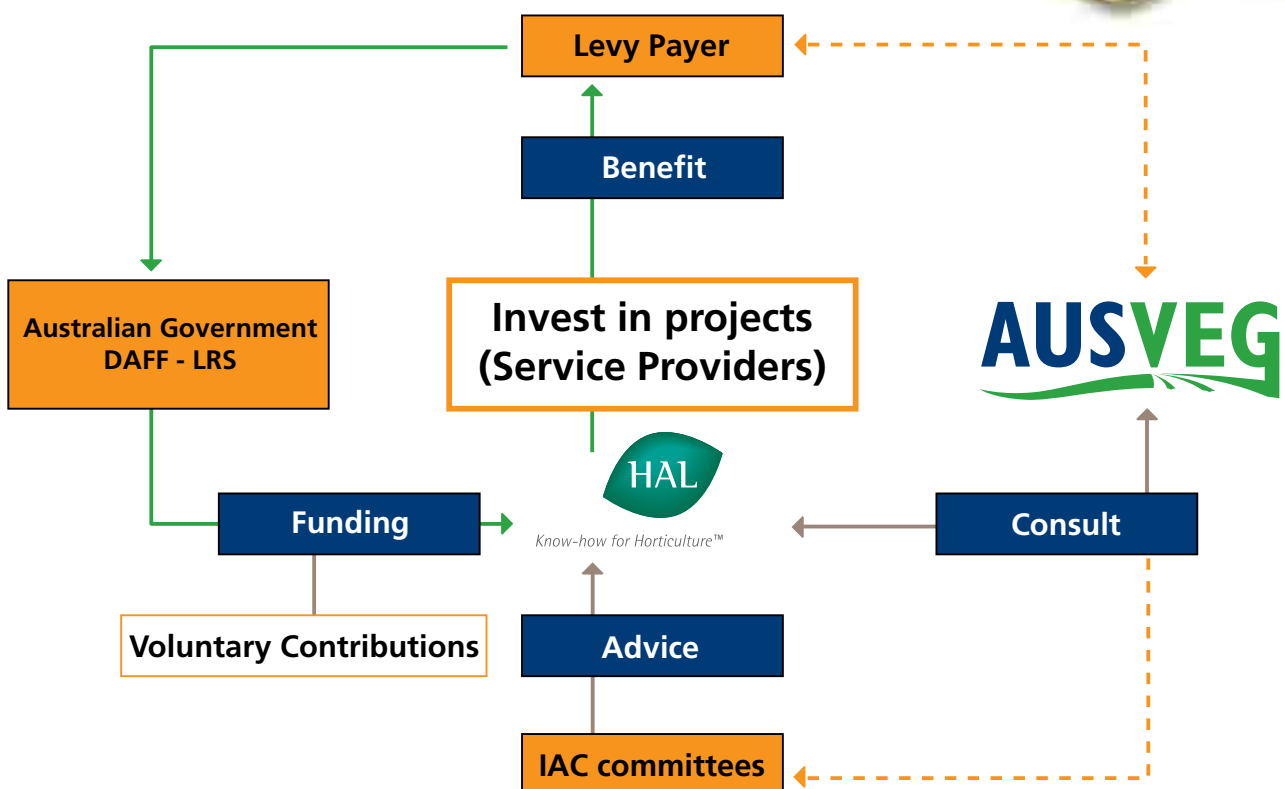
individuals they recommend.

The Vegetable IAC is a subcommittee of the 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.

While HAL is responsible for managing levy funds, it is the industry’s responsibility (through grower representation on the Vegetable IAC and Advisory and Working Groups) to recommend how levy funds should be invested in alignment with the industry’s strategic priorities.

The Vegetable IAC meets in person twice a year and has regular teleconferences. Project proposals are considered by the IAC in

these meetings and if approved, they are recommended to HAL for approval. Vegetable IAC members are often called upon to be part of specific project steering committees in order to provide advice during projects, to ensure they continue to meet industry needs. **va**



Levy payer 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, Jupiters Hotel-Casino Gold Coast, Queensland
 RSVP to Ms Erin Lyall: (03) 9822 0388, erin.lyall@ausveg.com.au
<http://ausveg.com.au/events-conferences.cfm>

Minor use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States covered
PER11952	Amistar 250SC (azoxystrobin) / Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cauliflower, Lettuce & Beans / Various fungal diseases	1-Apr-10	30-Sep-11	All states except Vic
PER11950	Chlorothalonil / Beetroot, celeriac, parsnip, papaya, Rubus & Ribes, spring onions, tamarillos / Various diseases	1-Apr-10	31-Mar-13	All states except Vic
PER11986	Filan (boscalid), Rovral (iprodione) & Bravo (chlorothalonil) / Onion / Neck Rot (Botrytis alli)	1-Apr-10	31-Mar-11	NSW, Tas
PER11941	Pirimicarb / Almond, Eggplant / Aphids (consolidated application)	1-Apr-10	31-Mar-12	All states except Vic
PER11949	Lambda-Cyhalothrin / Beetroot & Radish / Various Insects	1-Apr-10	31-Mar-15	All states except Vic
PER11950	Chlorothalonil / Beetroot, celeriac, parsnip, papaya, Rubus & Ribes, spring onions, tamarillos / Various diseases	1-Apr-10	31-Mar-13	All states except Vic
PER11572	Chlorothalonil / Spinach & Silverbeet / Downy Mildew, Alternaria Leaf Blight & Grey Mould	23-Feb-10	31-Mar-13	All states except Vic
PER11987	Linuron / celeriac / weeds	01-May-10	30-Apr-12	All states except Vic
PER10727	Ridomil Gold MZ (metalaxyl + mancozeb) / celery, silverbeet & spinach / Late blight, Septoria leaf blight, Downy mildew	25-Nov-08	30-Sep-12	All states except Vic



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Research boost

Tasmanian vegetable growers have been given a boost by the announcement of government funding to determine the needs and commercial viability of new Southeast Asian vegetable export markets.

The Federal Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, has committed up to \$116,000 to the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research, to develop a marketing and promotion strategy to determine the needs and commercial viability of new Southeast Asian vegetable

export markets.

“There is no reason why Australian growers should not be looking to export produce overseas. With the support of the Australian Government the industry should be looking to address the current trade deficit in vegetables which is around \$300 million on an annualised

basis,” AUSVEG Chairman John Brent said.

“This funding is particularly welcome in the Tasmanian region where growers have suffered a number of setbacks in recent times,” he said. **va**



Key players gather for Root Vegetable Think Tank

AUSVEG last month joined major industry stakeholders including root vegetable growers, researchers and processing company representatives from around Australia at a two day conference.

The Root Vegetable Think Tank was held in Adelaide from 19 - 20 April, to discuss important issues concerning the vegetable group, including current research and development (R&D) priorities.

Along with AUSVEG, it involved growers and packers, researchers, state industry development officers, representatives from major processing companies and Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

Delegates discussed issues facing the Australian root vegetable industry and discussed the priorities for future research and development (R&D) investment.

Similar conferences have been held for other major vegetable commodity groups in the past and they help to provide feedback about R&D investment priorities.

The think tanks draw on

knowledge and expertise from across the supply chain and from all states and territories. All issues relevant to the particular commodity group are discussed, including training, communication and ways of ensuring research and development outcomes result in benefits for growers.

The think tanks also present an opportunity to broaden industry networks and strengthen relationships between growers, research providers and other key industry stakeholders.

At the Root Vegetable Think Tank, information was presented by researchers, including senior plant pathologists, on current and recently completed HAL projects which concern root vegetables.

This allowed researchers to receive feedback about which

R&D outcomes are most important to growers and for growers to hear firsthand about what is actually being achieved through their contribution to the National Vegetable Levy.

Recommendations and feedback concerning future R&D investment in the root vegetables sector will be communicated to the Vegetable Industry Advisory Groups and the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee by organisers.

The think tank was facilitated by HAL and was funded by the National Vegetable Levy, with matched funding from the Australia Government. **va**

i For more information contact:
Andrew White
Snr Communications Officer
AUSVEG
Email: <andrew.white@ausveg.com.au>
Phone: (03) 9822 0388

The most important issues to the sustainability of the root vegetable sector nominated by delegates were:

1. An integrated national program approach to carrot R&D;
2. Seed quality issues;
3. Postharvest root rots;
4. Crown rot in carrots;
5. Alternative weed control methods for beetroot;
6. The Linuron withholding period;
7. Seed dressings for beetroot and radish;
8. Soil health;
9. Value chain analysis;
10. People development including IT training to enable easier access R&D information online.

Ask the industry



Scott Mathew
Syngenta

Building community awareness on food production and safety

The presence of trace levels of crop protection products, known as residues, in fresh and processed foods can attract considerable public attention, leading to questions over what such detections mean in terms of food safety.

When it comes to the safety of our food, Australian consumers are fortunate in a number of ways. Not only are our locally grown vegetables some of the cleanest and safest in the world, but consumers also benefit from a strong science-based framework to guide them in identifying what foods are safe to eat. That said, Australia's food regulation system is complex and confusion over the role and meaning of certain food related standards can lead to unnecessary community concern. More often than not, such confusion relates to maximum residue limits (MRLs), and what they actually mean.

What is a maximum residue limit and how are they determined?

Before a product can be registered, crop protection companies such as Syngenta are required to undertake a wide range of trials. These include trials to determine any residue of the pesticide in food crops (residue trials), in order to demonstrate to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) that a proposed use pattern will not pose a risk to the health and safety of consumers.

The APVMA also use this trial data to establish an MRL, which represents "the maximum concentration of a residue, resulting from the registered use of an agricultural or veterinary chemical, which is legally permitted in or on a food or agricultural commodity".

Importantly, an MRL is not intended to be a measure of food safety, but rather a clear standard to confirm that a product has been used in line with label or permit instructions. MRLs represent critical science-based standards which underpin the trade of food and fibre products within Australia and internationally.

Does an MRL breach in fresh produce mean that is unsafe?

Given that the specific role and function of an MRL is not widely understood, in rare cases when these limits are exceeded in fresh or processed foods, it is not surprising that consumers ask questions over whether affected produce may pose a food safety risk. However, given that MRLs are not measures of food safety but rather a reflection of good agricultural practice (or otherwise), an MRL breach

does not automatically imply that the food is unsafe.

The key measures when assessing the safety of a food product are both the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) and the Acute Reference Dose (ARfD). These measures, also determined by government when registering a new crop protection product, reflect the amount of a chemical which if consumed by an individual, each day over the course of their lifetime (in the case of the ADI); or in one single meal/day (in the case of the ARfD), would not be expected to result in an appreciable increase in risk to their health.

Taking into account both consumption patterns and residue concentrations detected in Australian produce monitoring programs, the overwhelming majority of the small number of MRL breaches observed are at levels far below corresponding ADIs and ARfDs – and hence well below any level at which they may pose a health risk.

How can a grower be confident their produce will be below relevant MRLs?

While an MRL breach may not pose a food safety threat, there are a wide range of very good reasons why growers should ensure their produce does not exceed MRLs. Not the least of which is so they can legally sell harvested crop as either food or feed.

Given that an MRL is based on a maximum label recommendation and is always higher than the highest individual value observed in pre-registration residue trials, growers can be confident that through following product labels their produce will not contain residues in excess of the MRL.

While it remains important for growers, with guidance from crop protection companies such as Syngenta, to strive to further reduce (and ideally eliminate) MRL breaches, it is equally important for us all to work together to raise community awareness and to allay any concerns and misgivings that minor MRL breaches may be putting at risk the safety of our food. **va**

If you have a question that you would like addressed, please ring Syngenta on 1800 067 108 or email Vegetables Australia: david.oneill@ausveg.com.au Please note that your questions may be published.



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Vegetable Industry set to converge on **the Gold Coast**



Members of the Australian vegetable industry are set to converge on the Gold Coast for the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence, to be held at Jupiters Hotel-Casino from 27 – 30 May.

An esteemed line up of speakers, an extensive trade show, and a long list of exciting events have members from across the industry packing their bags in readiness for what will be a truly world class event.

Queenland Liberal National Party Leader John-Paul Langbroek will open the Convention at a special poolside reception on Thursday, 27 May. The reception marks the start of what will be an incredible event and will include a welcoming address from AUSVEG Chairman John Brent.

Guests will be treated to a gourmet buffet in the relaxed surrounds of Jupiter's beautiful floodlit Pavilion Poolside.

Bumper Trade Show

With a vast array of quality exhibitors showcasing the latest in industry techniques and developments, the bumper Trade Show looms as one of the major drawcards of the event. At just \$22 for a day pass, it represents great value and will also feature entertainment and AFL legend, Robert "Dipper" DiPierdomenico as roving MC.

The Trade Show will be opened on Friday by Gold Coast Mayor Ron Clarke and concludes on Saturday afternoon, giving delegates two full days to visit the diverse range of exhibitors and allowing plenty of time to talk with trade representatives.

Leading fertiliser supplier Incitec Pivot will present a Research and Development

(R&D) Session running alongside the Trade Show, which will give growers a chance to hear about the latest R&D outcomes affecting the industry.

The session will begin with a brief R&D overview and feature six speakers covering a wide range of topics, including insects and diseases, soil health and water, innovations in new technologies and crop production, and climate change.

Bayer CropScience Sporting Identities Lunch

The Trade Show hall will also play host on Saturday 29 May to the Bayer CropScience Sporting Identities Lunch.

An impressive panel of sports stars have been announced for the event, including Elders Ambassador and former Australian Cricketer Glenn McGrath. The champion fast bowler will be joined by hockey player and Olympic Gold Medallist with the Kookaburras Brent Livermore, former AFL star and commentator Robert "Dipper" DiPierdomenico, and Professional Ironwoman, Hayley Bateup.

Despite their different backgrounds, each panel member has reached the very top of their chosen sport and become a household name in Australia. Delegates have the rare opportunity to listen to these sensational athletes speak about the sacrifices they have made to reach the top, the lessons they

have learned, and the stories accumulated along the way.

Women in Horticulture Breakfast

Elders Ambassador Glenn McGrath will also appear as the special guest at the 'Women in Horticulture' breakfast, held in support of the McGrath Foundation. The event, which will be held on the morning of Saturday 29 May, will raise much needed money for the McGrath Foundation which undertakes extraordinary work in helping to place breast cancer nurses in rural and regional communities throughout Australia. These nurser provide vital support and care to women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

The breakfast will recognise and celebrate the significant contributions made by women to the vegetable and potato industries.

Gala Awards night

On Saturday night, attention will turn to the National Awards for Excellence gala dinner.

The event, to be co-hosted by Robert "Dipper" DiPierdomenico and ABC presenter Jessica van Vonderen, promises to be a highlight of the Convention. Our industry's most successful members and organisations are be recognised for their contributions and achievements.

On behalf of Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, Queensland Minister for Tourism

and Fair Trading Peter Lawlor will present the Premier's Award to an industry member who has made a particularly significant contribution to the Australian vegetable and/or potato growing industry. A night of fine dining and entertainment including the Allan Brown Big Band awaits guests attending this prestigious event.

Sensational Support

AUSVEG would like to thank its leading partners: Syngenta, Bayer CropScience, Elders and DuPont for their support in creating an event that is truly world class and designed specifically to benefit Australian growers.

Other major sponsors who have provided crucial support are: Incitec Pivot, Boomaroo Nurseries, McCain Foods, The Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Dow AgroSciences, Brisbane Produce Market, Terranova Seeds, The QLD Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), John Deere Limited, Dobmac Agricultural Machinery, Toolpak Engineering, Vin Rowe Farm Machinery and Landpower.

The AUSVEG National Convention will be an event not to be missed. If you have not already filled out a registration form, it is not too late to do so. Please visit the AUSVEG website: www.ausveg.com.au/convention or contact AUSVEG directly on (03) 9544 8098. **va**

Registrations will remain open throughout the Convention and all are encouraged to attend this important industry event.



Convention program

Thursday 27 May

- 9.00am** Registration desk opens
- 6.30pm** Poolside Welcome Reception
- Official Welcome by John Brent - Chairman of AUSVEG
 - Mr. John-Paul Langbroek MP - Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the LNP, Parliament of Queensland
 - Robert DiPierdomenico - Former AFL Footballer

Friday 28 May

- 7.00am** Convention special breakfast - proudly sponsored by QLD Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation Venue: Pavillion Marquee
- 9.30am** Trade Show Opening - Address by Councillor Ron Clarke - Mayor – Gold Coast City Council
- 10.00am** Official Opening of the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence
- 10.20am** Mike Guerin - Chief Operating Officer, Elders Rural Services
- 10.40am** Martin Kneebone - Director - Freshlogic
- 11.00am** Morning Tea
- 11.30am** Joerg Ellmanns - Managing Director, Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd
- 11.50am** Senator Nick Xenophon - Independent Senator for South Australia
- 12.10pm** Keynote address: Major General Michael Jeffery former Governor-General of Australia
- 12.30pm** David Hughes - Group General Manager Commercial. Plant & Food Research New Zealand
- 1.00pm** Lunch in the Trade Show
- 2.00pm** Potato Levy Payers Meeting - Fresh and Processed Potatoes IAC Chair John Rich
- 2.30pm** Vegetable Levy Payers Meeting - Vegetable IAC Chair Jeff McSpedden
- 5.00pm** Trade Exhibition closes
- 6.00pm** Coaches Depart for Special Theme Night - Australian Outback Spectacular 2
- 9.30pm** Coaches Depart for Jupiters (return approx. 10.00pm)



Greg Davis



Saturday 29 May

7.30am 'Women in Horticulture' Breakfast - Brought to you by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. This event is in support of the McGrath Foundation. Venue: Pavillion Marquee

- Chair Maureen Dobra - Loose Leaf Lettuce Company Gingin WA
- Sarah Pettitt - National Farmers Union UK Horticulture Chairman
- Glenn McGrath - Former Australian Cricketer
- Robert DiPierdomenico - Former AFL Footballer

9.00am Trade Exhibition Opens

9.00am R&D Overview - Peter Dal Santo

9.15am Jeff McSpedden - Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee Chairman

9.30am Dr Sandra McDougall (Insects & Diseases), Industry Leader - Field Vegetables

9.45am Dr Ian Porter (Soil Health & Water) - Principal Research Scientist with the Victorian (DPI)

10.00am Dr Susan Lambert (Innovations, New technologies and crop production)
Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research

10.15am Associate Professor Dr Robert Edis brought to you by Incitec Pivot

10.45am Q&A and discussion - Peter Dal Santo

11.00am Morning Tea

11.20am Paul Luxton, Syngenta General Manager

11.40am Dr Eva Bennett-Jenkins - Chief Executive Officer APVMA

12.20pm Greg Davis - General Manager Fresh Produce - Coles

12.40pm Kathryn Adams - Research Fellow with the Australian Centre for Intellectual Property in Agriculture

1.00pm Bayer CropSciences 'Sporting Identities' Lunch in the Trade Show, guest speakers include:

- Robert DiPierdomenico - Former AFL Footballer
- Glenn McGrath - Elders Ambassador
- Brent Livermore - Australian Olympic Hockey Gold Medalist
- Hayley Bateup - Professional Ironwoman
- Michelle Ferris - Australian Olympic Cyclist

4.00pm Trade Exhibition closes

7.00pm AUSVEG 'National Awards for Excellence' Gala Dinner

- Robert DiPierdomenico - Former AFL Footballer
- Jessica van Vonderen - ABC News (QLD)

Sunday 30 May

11.30am Coaches Depart for Corporate Golf Day at Palm Meadows Golf Course

12.00pm Corporate Golf Day - proudly sponsored by Boomaroo Nurseries



Glenn McGrath



Sarah Pettitt



New members of

The appointment of the new Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has been welcomed members combines extensive on farm and practicable vegetable growing knowledge, experience in business management, science and trade in vegetables.

Vegetable IAC Independent Chair



Mr Jeff McSpedden

One of the Australian vegetable industry's most experienced and respected members, Mr Jeff McSpedden, has been appointed to the position of Independent Chair of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). He replaces Mr Peter Deuter who relinquished the role due to time constraints. Mr McSpedden is a former IAC member and has over 43 years of experience in the industry, producing his first crop at just 17 years of age. An owner of two vegetable farms, located south of Bathurst, Mr McSpedden grows brassicas, sweet corn and lucerne. Mr McSpedden said it was important to have continuity in development so that the industry reaches a level of stability. "We must ensure the levy payer has every confidence that levy dollars are going to best use," he said. Mr McSpedden also stressed the importance that all parties involved in the process were working together to achieve optimal results. "We need to be working in unison, right through from the working and advisory groups, to the IAC and HAL, ensuring also, that AUSVEG is involved at every stage of the process," he said. Mr McSpedden is the current Chairman of the Environment Working Group. He is also a former Vice Chairman of AUSVEG, and a Director of the Cowra Export Packers group. Mr McSpedden has been a member of the NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee and Executive Council.



Mr Roger Turner

Mr Roger Turner was appointed to the IAC at the end of 2009, as the Victorian representative replacing Mr John Said. Originally from the United Kingdom, Mr Turner is General Manager of Coolibah Herbs, a large operation growing various lettuce commodities with 14 locations across Victoria. With over 25 years of experience in the fresh produce sector, including time spent managing farming operations in Africa, Mr Turner brings to the position a high level of industry expertise and international knowledge that will enhance the function of the IAC. Mr Turner has shown enormous enthusiasm for the Australian vegetable industry since migrating from England five years ago.



Mr Kent West

Mr Kent West is Managing Director of West Farms Pty Ltd, which is a family-owned specialist carrot growing and packing operation at Kalbar in South East Queensland. Supplying to the major supermarket chains, West Farms has 300 hectares of carrots and another four growers in the Lockyer and Fassifern Valleys with a combined 800 hectares, who also supply to the packing shed. Mr West is Chairman of Growcom's Vegetable Special Interest Group, having represented Queensland growers on QFVG's Vegetable Sectional Group for over 10 years. He has also previously participated in various National R&D groups including working and advisory groups.

the Vegetable IAC

with great enthusiasm by the industry. The collective expertise of the new committee with experience in reading and reviewing R&D project proposals, and also



Mr Peter Ward

Mr Peter Ward is a fourth generation vegetable grower, managing the family farm at Upper Colo in NSW. Since the age of 12, Mr Ward has been gaining experience in all aspects of vegetable growing. Though historically the farm has produced various horticulture products, currently the vegetables under production include cabbage, cauliflower, sweet corn and pumpkin. Mr Ward holds a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Health obtained at Hawkesbury College of Advanced Education (Hawkesbury Agricultural College). His academic career has also involved work as a Lecturer at the University of West Sydney, with the School of Environment and Agriculture. During this period he was the Coordinator of the university's undergraduate courses in water quality and the management of native vegetation.



Dr Melina Parker

Dr Melina Parker brings to the IAC a mixture of practical knowledge and significant academic credentials. A sixth generation grower from northern Tasmania, Dr Parker holds a PhD in Marketing and degrees in both Business and Commerce. Dr Parker works as Manager of her family's business, Milton Farms, and as Sales and Marketing Director of Shima Wasabi, a joint venture with two other Tasmanian growers, producing fresh wasabi for the Australian market. Dr Parker's academic qualifications and her passion for growing vegetables made her an ideal candidate to join the IAC.



Mr Danny De Ieso

Mr Danny De Ieso joins the IAC after previously participating as a member of the Information Technology Development and Dissemination Advisory Group. Mr De Ieso is Owner and Director of Thorndon Park Produce on the Adelaide Plains which employs in excess of 30 staff. With experience in supplying produce for both domestic and export markets, Mr De Ieso has also served three terms as a Director of the Adelaide Produce Markets and was previously a Board Member of the Virginia Horticulture Centre. With his son assuming more responsibility within the business, Mr De Ieso is keen to dedicate more time to industry research and development.



Mrs Denise Ellement

Mrs Denise Ellement is another member with both vegetable growing experience and extensive academic achievements. With a Masters in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts, combined with her history of growing vegetables that dates back to 1969, Mrs Ellement is an ideal candidate to represent Western Australia on the IAC. Mrs Ellement has first hand experience in all facets of growing vegetables, joining her husband in developing a property that initially produced a variety of crops including carrots, lettuce, onions and cauliflowers. Mrs Ellement has taken great pride in taking a hands on approach in the business, which expanded in the 1980s and began growing leeks. In 1995 the decision was made to focus exclusively on leek production and marketing, a focus that still continues today.



One year on

12 months after assuming the position of AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy talks to *Vegetables Australia* about clearing the decks, the substantial gains already made and the challenges that remain, writes David O'Neill.

You have a history of successfully tackling industry associations that required substantial re-invigorating or repositioning. Was this what attracted you to the position of CEO at AUSVEG?

AUSVEG represented a major challenge but had at its disposal a very positive message. It also appeared critical to the Australian economy and the Australian people especially given the emerging importance of food security in this country.

The organisation has an important role to play in engaging the general public and decision-makers, so that every possible effort is made to encourage growth in profitability in the industry. Having a viable food production industry will not only provide economic benefits to Australia but also benefit the broader Australian community which is tackling obesity and diabetes on an epidemic scale. We as an industry are poised to be part of the solution to these dietary and lifestyle issues, if we can develop new ways of conveying our message.

What were your major objectives when you were appointed to the position?

When I started at AUSVEG there were significant challenges that the AUSVEG Board wanted me to address. These issues became quite evident after a review of operations in the initial weeks following my appointment.

AUSVEG was challenged on many fronts. Its financial position was less than ideal, its media profile wasn't strong — except in those circumstances where it was strong for the wrong reasons — it had no advocacy program in place, and its relationship with its member organisations was weak, with limited ongoing communication. But arguably our biggest challenge was to reconnect with growers, who had become disenchanted by the organisation's failure to adequately convey their concerns in relation to the expenditure of R&D levies.

Your first year as CEO has seen enormous change to the organisation. How did this change occur?

It was a matter of tackling things in a logical fashion, starting with the foundations and ensuring that we restructured with a team of highly skilled young professionals. We needed a team who would be dedicated to promoting the interests of growers/levy payers, as well being responsive to the concerns of our member organisations and the views of the AUSVEG Board of Directors.



The next stage was to address those areas that were likely to impact on the affairs of the operation, or that related to the concerns raised by our constituents. Enhanced financial resources were required but so too was the need for greater interaction with the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC). To ensure growers' concerns were well understood in the process of awarding funding for R&D projects, our relationship with these groups needed to strengthen.

AUSVEG has made substantial gains in a short period of time, how do you see the accomplishments of the last 12 months?

Everything is on track. We now have a young, skilled and enthusiastic team that is second to none in terms of agricultural or horticultural industry associations.

On the financial front, AUSVEG is on the verge of holding a National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence, an event that is no longer reliant on industry levies to make it viable. In fact, there are no levy funds at all being used to stage this event.

We have also entered into a range of strategic partnerships and agreements with organisations who, with AUSVEG, share a common interest in addressing the needs of growers.

These include companies such as: Elders, DuPont, Bayer CropScience and Syngenta, which has enabled AUSVEG to better inform growers of the work they are undertaking in developing methods of managing diseases and pests, on a more cost effective basis, with products that are safe and environmentally sensitive.

The IAC renewal process has also taken place and we are proud to have an IAC, advisory groups and working groups that represent the best talent available in the Australian vegetable industry.

Finally, the dialogue with Executive Directors of our member organisations now occurs on a regular basis through teleconferences, face-to-face meetings and other forms of communication. This ensures we are aware and sensitive to their needs.

Does this mean the grower has greater representation?

Absolutely. We have strengthened the organisation dramatically in that sense. We have made ourselves more responsive to state and local bodies of which growers are members. We've also become better equipped to convey their concerns to national decision makers in Canberra whether it is at the parliamentary level or in the bureaucracy.

Our profile in the national media in both electronic and print format has grown significantly, giving the grower a voice on the issues that matter most to them.

Growers have arguably never faced greater challenges. What role will AUSVEG play in helping growers confront these?

AUSVEG can't change world economics but we can work with our members on a range of fronts.

We are striving to give them greater access to the research and development work being undertaken in the industry, and to ensure the outcomes from such projects flow through tangible benefits, which growers can see first hand in their own operations.

We are also actively involved in, and will continue to give priority to, all of the consultative processes provided in biosecurity. Working closely with Plant Health Australia and the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, we will ensure developments that may pose a threat to growers' viability can be tackled as expeditiously as possible.

AUSVEG will continue to develop its profile in both electronic and print media to ensure the views of our constituents are expressed. If there are public discussions on issues of concern, there will be an AUSVEG representative who is available for comment 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Recently I participated in a radio programme at 3.15 am in the morning, a discussion broadcast on 45 radio stations across Australia and our Head of Communications undertook a similar task at 4.30 am on another morning, also broadcast extensively across Australia. If



- Enhanced media profile.
- Increased communication with state members.
- A stable financial position.
- Reinvigoration of IACs, Advisory groups and Working groups.
- A stronger voice in agri-political affairs, Underway



the job calls for it, we'll not shy away from those sorts of demands.

Do you see the role of AUSVEG expanding in the future?

We are determined to build our profile in an agri-political sense which we hope to strengthen in the year ahead as resources become available to the organisation.

We want to be in the position where the interests of vegetable and potato growers are given considerable weight at the national level and this can only be achieved through an effective public affairs program.

This will encompass face-to-face meetings, an enhanced media profile and a general improvement in communication on issues of concern.

We will still maintain our involvement in R&D projects but the organisation will continue to go through further change so that we are more broadly aligned with providing a representative service on behalf of the industry.

I walked into an organisation that had significant historical problems. But I thrive on the challenge of continuing to improve and put it in better shape to take on the sort of issues that are looming for growers. I hope that's what we will achieve in the coming years. **va**

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From little things,
big things
GROW



Eric Jacometti, Co-owner and Director of Boomaroo Nurseries, speaks to *Vegetables Australia* about how from small beginnings, their home grown business has become one of the country's largest seedling producers, writes David O'Neill.

Boomaroo Nurseries began as a two-person operation, an idea that has grown into a thriving business now producing over 270 million vegetable seedlings every year. Despite this incredible expansion, the nursery, as Mr Jacometti explained, is still based on simple philosophies.

A commitment to innovation and quality, to the people they employ, and most importantly the growers they service and supply.

"It's about doing what's right," Mr Jacometti said. And in every facet of the operation, whether it is water saving methods, chemical control, quality assurance or staff management, Boomaroo Nurseries is a shining example of a business based on values, one that is both environmentally and socially responsible.

Humble beginnings

Mr Jacometti was just fifteen years old when brother Michael

convinced his younger sibling that growing vegetables might be the business for them. From a non-farming background, the pair took a different approach to that of conventional growers.

"Because of my father's background in engineering, we were pretty methodical with our planning, and were able to look at overlaid market prices from different states and look for different trends in different products we could grow," Mr Jacometti said.

Despite a tough start, their meticulous planning and some fresh ideas — such as planting on a larger scale — paved the way for a number of successful years, momentum they carried into their next business idea. The brothers were struggling to find a good source of plants with disease an all too constant problem, which led them to start growing their own seedlings in trays.

"This was pretty new at the time and when other growers started to show interest in what we were growing, we committed more and more time to this side

of the business," Mr Jacometti said.

"Then as the industry moved from a bare rooted plant to a cell grown plant, we capitalised on that and grew rapidly."

A third brother, Theo also joined the business in 1988, and now alongside Eric, manages the nursery situated in Lara, between Geelong and Melbourne.

Industry leadership

On 45 acres, the nursery grows seedlings for farms across Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. But according to Mr Jacometti, the business is far more than just a supplier.

"We are not only product providers but we are also service providers as well," he said.

"Especially over the last 10 years, we've found that servicing the customer, even if it means just being there to listen to a complaint, is very important to our business."

Not only does Boomaroo Nurseries work closely with growers, it also plays a key role for processors, suppliers and other end users.

"We're able to work with the end user, for example, if

continued over page ►



somebody needs a new product brought to the shelf then we can be in the best position to recommend the growers who could produce it for them," Mr Jacometti said.

But the businesses' involvement in the vegetable industry extends far beyond normal practice, with innovation and a commitment to fighting disease defining the nursery which has become an industry leader.

The best example of this, is Boomaroo's role in nullifying the effect of the *Nasonovia* Aphid (lettuce aphid).

The aphid which caused destruction to lettuce crops around the world arrived in Australia six years ago. Boomaroo were key players in preparing the nation for its arrival, taking part in steering committees that aimed to limit its affect.

"We worked with growers, chemical companies and Ag departments to prepare Australia for the arrival of the pest. It was very successful to the point where the loss our growers experienced was basically zero," Mr Jacometti said.

Boomaroo have continued to create strong links with chemical suppliers and play a key role in testing the efficacy of chemicals within the nursery. Working with Bayer CropScience, Boomaroo were able to help the company develop their chemical Confidor, which ultimately benefits the

Mr Jacometti said.

"Now the new chemicals coming down the line from DuPont, Syngenta and Bayer work on that philosophy, where crops are protected for an extended period of time in the field, because of the work done in our nursery."

Boomaroo have also been

"We spent in excess of \$400,000 developing a machine that doses the plants accurately. The industry practice is to treat a single tray at a time, but we actually do upwards of 160 trays at a time, and are setting new industry standards for the acceptable tolerance levels," Mr Jacometti said.

Quality is the nursery's number one priority, producing seedlings that reap the best rewards for growers.

This approach has led to an extensive quality assurance program which is why the nursery can appear to the numerous students, study groups and growers who visit each year, almost like a factory.

"A lot of people who come in here see a lot of process; they see it more as a factory than a nursery," Mr Jacometti said. "We are at the mercy of the weather like everyone else, but generally because of our stringent processes, it means our deliveries are always made in full, on time and in most cases achieve very close to 100 per cent customer satisfaction." Working closely with chemical companies,

“Because we have been vegetable growers ourselves, we have a keen understanding of exactly the issues they have, and try to solve these before the growers get the plant.”

grower, as they don't have to experiment with its use themselves.

"We were able to treat the plants here in the nursery and give protection from that pest for the full life of that plant,"

prominent in the industry in regard to innovation.

An example of this is the development of a new spraying technique that has increased the efficiency of their operation significantly.



Eric Jacometti, co-owner and Director of Boomaroo Nurseries

implementing innovative techniques and an advanced quality program has lead to a more efficient and profitable business, but as Mr Jacometti explained, nothing is done unless it will lead to a benefit for the grower.

"We don't make money if the grower doesn't make money. If we can do anything that makes our growers more profitable, then it works to our advantage," he said.

The Jacometti brothers are rightfully proud of what they have been able to achieve, and the positive impact they have had.

"Everything we do here is aimed at bringing about a cost benefit for our growers, whether it is increased yields, increased efficiency, or labour savings," Mr Jacometti said

"Because we have been vegetable growers ourselves, we have a keen understanding of exactly the issues they have, and try to solve these before the growers get the plant."

Developing a culture

Employing approximately 100 staff, 50 in growing, and another

50 in administration, sales, delivery and maintenance, the nursery has invested extensively in staff training.

"It's one of our major philosophies in the business, that when a person eventually leaves here, they leave with more tools in their tool kit than when they arrived," Mr Jacometti said.

Each year the business provides its staff with opportunities to advance their

skills by undertaking training courses and has had a great response rate from their staff. "It gives the staff a feeling of belonging, that everyone is on a learning curve," he said. According to Mr Jacometti, just as important as training his staff, is instilling in them a commitment to supporting the local community.

The staff of Boomeroo Nurseries regularly volunteer their time, working with local community

groups to help the disadvantaged gain access to food and shelter.

"This community work has definitely helped with building the culture of our business," Mr Jacometti said.

"It's not one particular thing, it's a commitment to your staff from all sides, from providing training and help on a personal level, as well supporting the local community."

On the horizon

For a business that has often been at the forefront of industry developments, *Vegetables Australia* was keen to find out what was next on the horizon for Boomeroo Nurseries.

Mr Jacometti said that the big challenges of driving input costs down, increasing productivity and reducing labour costs would be the business' focus going forward. He also spoke of new developments in using transplants instead of seedlings, which is being introduced with success in the onion industry, indicating that this may be the future for Australian vegetable growers. **va**



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Mum was right

As the vegetable industry's Domestic Market Development Strategy approaches its second year, we look at outcomes that may redefine the way the industry connects with consumers, writes David O'Neill.

“Eat your vegetables and you'll grow up big and strong!”

It is a line just about every parent has uttered at some stage in the hope of convincing their children to finish their dinner and eat their greens.

Most people have an ingrained notion of the health benefits of vegetables due to parental influence, and are aware of the long term benefits in terms of preventing serious disease. But with so many different commodities offering varying affects on one's health, in the confusion the day to day health benefits of vegetable consumption can at times be forgotten.

Program 7.3 of the vegetable industry's Domestic Market Development Strategy (DMDS), which focuses on the

specific health benefits for different vegetables/groups of vegetables, hopes to provide clarity in this confusion, by informing consumers about the definitive health benefits of eating a broad range of vegetables.

The DMDS is a multi-faceted project which aims to change

“Eat your vegetables and you'll grow up big and strong!”

consumer attitudes towards vegetables and encourage an increase in not only consumption but also the perceived value of vegetables.

It is facilitated by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) and funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

Conducting this important project is Brand Story; a unique Sydney based company that Managing Director Steve Sheppard describes as a “Fusion of strategic researchers, with brand and marketing strategists, who deliver marketing programs for a diverse range of clients.” “We pride ourselves on not only conducting thorough research but converting findings into

actions,” Mr Sheppard said.

These attributes are of significant importance to the DMDS. The carefully constructed market strategy ensures programs are based on gathering all the essential information that effect the vegetable industry before creating outcomes that demonstrate a thorough understanding of that information.

Rigorous research

The DMDS is about to enter its second year, which for program 7.3, means focusing on using the information gathered in year one and turning prototypes into tools that will be used by government and non-government organisations, health practitioners, the education system, processors

Celebrating vegetables and their health benefits

Balanced Brain	Vegetables which are sources of B vitamins & folate which help nourish the brain for everyday function & performance
Help healthy Sight	Vegetables which are good sources of carotenoids to help maintain healthy vision
Sustained Energy	Vegetables which are low GI (Glycaemic Load) and a source of fibre to help you stay energised for longer
Responsive Immunity	Vegetables which contain phytochemicals
Help curb Hunger pangs	Vegetables which are sources of fibre & have high water content which help you feel fuller for longer between meals
Immunity & skin boost	Vegetables which are sources of vitamin C & carotenoids which help build your immune system & help your skin have a healthy glow
Vital Hydration	Vegetables which have a high water content to help hydrate your skin & body
Healthier Insides	Vegetables which are sources of fibre for everyday digestive health

and retailers, to educate consumers about the health benefits of vegetables.

These various stakeholders were engaged because they play a key role in achieving the programs' objectives by disseminating the information that aims to reconnect the vegetable industry with its consumers.

According to Mr Sheppard, achieving these key objectives is a responsibility Brand Story does not take lightly.

"We've been given the responsibility of using the National Vegetable Levy funding to turn research into actionable and educational pieces of information that can ultimately be used by consumers and the wider industry," Mr Sheppard said.

The consumer research component was conducted

out information for specific programs such as the consumers' reaction to proposed educational tools."

Celebrating health benefits

A tool which is still being developed but has shown great promise in testing, is the Vegetable Health Benefit Educational Tool. Specifically designed for program 7.3, the tool aims to promote the health benefits of vegetables and offers consumers definitive information on the specific benefits of individual vegetable commodities.

The prototype is based on eight key health categories that consumers nominated were the most important to them. The preferred categories indicate that parental influences still

“Some real hero vegetables have emerged that fit into many of the eight categories, and others that have a high correlation to one category in particular.”

using an evolving survey known as the Vegetracker, which has been gathering consumer information for two years. This valuable tool is used every six months, in both the summer and in the winter, to build a picture of consumers' attitudes towards vegetables and importantly their purchasing behaviour.

The Vegetracker measures 1200 people annually and nationally, who represent the grocery buyers of Australia, and poses questions such as: how often do you buy vegetables? How much are you spending on vegetables? And, how many serves do you consume each day?

Mr Sheppard described it as an incredibly flexible tool. "It is underpinning the decisions on how best to engage consumers, it's testing reactions, finding out about behaviors and importantly defining spending habits," he said.

"Not only can the survey over time capture key metrics, but can also be adapted to find

linger, with traditional benefits such as helping brain function and building a better immune system considered important by consumers. However, research also indicates that new values are developing, with the survey showing that knowing which vegetables provide sustained energy was also a category considered important by consumers.

The new eight categories can be seen at the bottom of page 30.

To determine what vegetables fit into each category, a nutritionist was engaged to sift through the scientific information currently available on the nutritional content (in their raw form) of vegetables in line with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) nutrient function claims.

Mr Sheppard explained how this information completed the puzzle and allowed such a prototype to be developed.

"Good scientific data provided by the nutritionist

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continued over page ►

allowed us to align the specific health categories that the consumers determined were essential with certain vegetable types, or vegetable groups. It gives consumers an opportunity to navigate the categories which are personally important to them and to make decisions on a broader range of vegetables," he said.

The prototype illustrates perfectly the objective of Brand Story with this particular component of the DMDS, which Mr Sheppard explained is to, "Marry up what scientific information is available with what consumers consider the most important in terms of health benefits, and then develop educational tools which convert the information into what will work best in the market place."

When survey participants were presented with this concept — which is still only a prototype and yet to be finalised — and were asked to rate how it made them feel towards vegetables, 87 per cent indicated that it made them feel more positively about vegetable consumption and inspired them to eat a

greater variety of vegetables.

It is important to test such prototypes with consumers Mr Sheppard said. "Not only do we receive feedback on the overall concept but we also gain an insight into what language and what design feature is most appealing."

Brand Story's Strategic Research Manager, Heather Jones, spoke excitedly about what the prototype reveals.

"We are working where the weight of scientific evidence is, and as a result, some real hero vegetables have emerged which have good concentrations of the bundles of nutrients linked to a specific health benefit," she said.

While these 'hero' vegetables will be presented to the consumer, Mrs Jones explained that this information will be presented in such a way that helps the consumer link a particular benefit to a far broader range of vegetables.

"Carrots are for example an important source of carotenes which contribute to healthy sight, but many other orange vegetables can also help in this respect. So we help the

consumer to link orange vegetables to healthy sight. Colour coding and simple guidelines will help encourage consumers to explore the category," she said.

"Consumers are very interested in the information and prototype we have produced and love having the perceptions they hold about certain vegetables, such as carrots and better sight, affirmed. It helps them buy into the whole proposition."

Guidelines surrounding the communication of the health benefits are currently being prepared and will be distributed to consumer education channel stakeholders such as government departments, non-government organisations, retailers and processors during May 2010.

Overall, the strategy aims to educate consumers and increase vegetable consumption, which in turn should result in better returns for Australian growers. An example of the prototype developed as part of program 7.3 of the DMDS can be seen below. **va**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Program 7.3 of the industry's Domestic Market Development Strategy is close to finalising communication tools that will engage consumers by defining the health benefits for specific vegetables.
- Consumer surveys and a Nutritionist were used to marry the scientific information available on vegetables with what consumers find most important in regards to health benefits.
- A prototype titled the Vegetable Health Benefit Educational Tool promises to become an invaluable tool in the battle to increase vegetable consumption and the perceived value of vegetables.

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Project Number: VG08077
Keywords: Domestic marketing

Vegetables which are sources of vitamin C & carotenes which help build your immune system & help your skin have a healthy glow



Vegetables which are low GL (Glycaemic Load) & a source of fibre to help you stay energised for longer



Tackling disease

A new publication which was released in April gives growers a comprehensive guide to diseases affecting vegetable crops in Australia.

D*iseases of Vegetable Crops* in Australia, a new book published by the CSIRO, is set to become an essential reference for Australian growers. It will explore the nature of all diseases that affect vegetable crops in Australia and provide a guide on how to diagnose specific diseases that cause considerable financial damage each year.

Co-author Denis Persley told *Vegetables Australia* that not only will the book be an essential reference for growers, but it will also appeal to their consultants and managers, horticulturists, plant pathologists, plant protection diagnosticians, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) specialists, educators, students and agribusiness representatives, as well as the enthusiastic home gardener and hobby farmer.

"The book provides information on all the major diseases effecting vegetable crops in Australia and is a great starting point for growers who can find out exactly what they are facing and where to find more detailed information about a specific disease," Mr Persley said.

Knowledge update

The book includes an account of the causes of plant diseases and the principles underlying their management, as well as an overview of important diseases common to many Australian vegetable crops. Based on the highly regarded 1993 edition of *Diseases of Vegetable Crops*, this new guide has been extensively revised and

expanded. It now includes descriptions on causal pathogens, symptoms, sources of infection, explores how diseases are spread and recommends management for 36 major and specialty crops.

Featuring quality colour images to help growers diagnose diseases more easily, the publication will also address those diseases that are biosecurity threats to Australian vegetable producers.

The guide is the result of 18 months of information gathering and revision of knowledge to update the previous version. Mr Persley said the update contained a wealth of new information, including a reference that focuses on integrated methods for managing pests.

The book, valued at \$150, is now available for sale via the CSIRO publishing website

www.publish.csiro.au and will be officially launched at the inaugural AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence to be held at Conrad Jupiters Hotel-Casino from 27 - 30 May.

This revised version of the book was supported by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) project VG07136, Review of diseases of vegetable crops, as part of the national vegetable pathology program.

About the authors

Denis Persley is a Principal Plant Pathologist with Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries (QPIF). Tony Cooke is a Senior Experimental Officer with Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries (QPIF). Susan House is a specialist in information extension with Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries (QPIF). **va**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A new publication released in April gives growers a comprehensive guide to diseases affecting vegetable crops in Australia.
- The book includes an account of the causes of plant diseases and the principles underlying their management, as well as a reference guide which directs growers to where they can find out more detailed information about a specific disease.



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Give away

The next 3 growers to register for the Inaugural AUSVEG National Convention and mention this promotion will win a copy of this publication.

Combining

While sweet corn is generally a high-yield crop, strong potential exists for further to improve the industry's competitive advantage using a range of smart solutions disease resilience, writes Gretel Sneath.

Most varieties of sweet corn grown in Australia are adapted to tropical, sub-tropical and warm temperate regions. However, it is widely acknowledged that the identification and development of hybrids with additional resistance to current production constraints, would not only serve to protect the local industry but pave the way for possible market expansion.

An ongoing project being carried out by Queensland's Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) examines the growth potential of sweet corn production by combining genetic resistance with high eating quality. Scheduled for

completion in 2012, the project also looks to identify hybrids which can be more widely adapted to prevailing environmental conditions.

Dr Solomon Fekybelu heads the team of researchers experimenting with pre-emptive breeding strategies using biotechnology and more conventional approaches, in order to guarantee resistance from existing tropical diseases such as Polysora rust (*Puccinia polysora*) and the exotic threat Downy mildew (*Peronosclerospora sorghi*).

"Wider adoption of these hybrids and our success in marketing these, will very much depend on our ability to incorporate gene(s) or

“ we want growers to be ready and have hybrids on stand-by which are resistant to the disease. ”

quantitative trait loci (QTLs) that are resistant against the major foliar diseases threatening the sweet corn industry," Dr Fekybelu said.

"Heavy Polysora rust infections may result in stunting, incomplete ear tip fill and pustules on ear husks, reducing yield and marketability. Incorporation of Polysora rust resistance is thus vital to expand sweet corn production in tropical Australia."

Downy mildew is another major disease causing significant problems in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of Asia.

"If an outbreak does occur in Australia, we want growers to be ready and have hybrids on



the best

production increases. Queensland researchers are leading the push designed to overcome environmental limitations and improve

stand-by which are resistant to the disease," Dr Fekybelu said.

"Asia is also a significant market for Australian bred hybrids such as H5, so in addition, it is important for our hybrids to demonstrate resistance in order to maintain and possibly expand their market share."

Genetic resistance is the most cost-effective means of control and has become essential since the emergence of strains which are resistant to the systemic fungicide metalaxyl. During 2009, DEEDI ran trials which compared the performance of a new generation of 44 hybrids against commercially available samples (H5) at three different locations.

Selection for tenderness and flavour in tropically-adapted supersweet corn germplasm in the Kairi (North Queensland) breeding program has resulted in improvements in eating quality. Dr Fekybelu explained that this is several years ahead of similar material in other tropical breeding programs in terms of resistance to the most prevalent diseases of supersweet corn. New test hybrids have demonstrated significantly superior kernel tenderness to Hybrix 5, the first very successful tropical hybrid released from the Kairi program.

Data is currently being summarised from a third location — the Hermitage Research Station (QLD) — but

more work is needed to verify the performance consistency of the candidate hybrids in different seasons (winter versus summer, for instance) and growing environments. This could not only set the scene for increased production of sweet corn in tropical areas of Australia, but also facilitate the expansion of the industry into areas such as the Atherton Tableland and other regions that experience high rainfall.

"Once we finish analysing the multi-location trials, we will conduct further tests in winter growing environments to verify the consistency of performance and suitability for commercial production," Dr Fekybelu said.

The pre-emptive breeding work also requires further tests to validate marker-assisted back crossing which can then be translated in actual field performance in the presence of Downy mildew.

"By using biotechnology, we will hopefully be able to identify such varieties and then send samples overseas where the disease is present in order to verify whether that resistance is working or not," Dr Fekybelu said.

The validation process is expected to take place in collaboration with a private seed company, and the findings will help to confirm the prospects for commercial production. **va**



THE BOTTOM LINE

- An ongoing project being carried out by Queensland's Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) is examining the growth potential of sweet corn production by combining genetic resistance with high eating quality.
- During 2009, DEEDI ran trials which compared the performance of a new generation of 44 hybrids against commercially available samples (H5) at three different locations.
- Results appear promising in terms of the eating quality of new sweet corn hybrids and tests are underway to investigate their resistance to major existing diseases.

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Appearance of the cob of some of the potential winner new sweet corn hybrid

Exploring the production of bitter melon in Australia

As part of an international project concerned with Asian vegetables in both Vietnam and Australia, researchers from Industry and Investment NSW are focusing on the production of bitter melon.

There is growing consumer demand internationally for natural products with demonstrated health benefits.

Australia is in a unique position to exploit this demand by producing vegetables in a clean environment with advanced technical development.

A natural product with reported health benefits, bitter melon has been used for many years to assist in the treatment of diabetes and in some clinical trials it has been shown to reduce the affects of Type II diabetes.

Bitter melon is part of the Asian vegetables category and is grown in only a few areas of Australia. The longest growing season occurs in the Northern Territory. Plant Physiologist Dr Sophie Parks said a new project aims to extend the length of the growing season in more temperate areas of NSW by using greenhouse technology. According to Dr Parks, greenhouse technology may

prolong the growing season in these areas and reduce the reliance on interstate produce. "Greenhouses also have the advantage of reducing the need for pesticides, as pests and diseases can be excluded," she said.

To demonstrate the viability of a crop of bitter melon planted in early summer, 20 bitter melon varieties were grown in a fully automated greenhouse at the Gosford Primary Industries Institute on the NSW Central Coast. Climate control of the greenhouse maintained night time temperatures above 15°C to ensure that the cold did not limit production. Early production was achieved, however, the method of using a leaf blower to circulate pollen did not result in good pollination. A further greenhouse trial this year will evaluate different pollination methods.

The project also included a small consumer survey, conducted with six varieties to

evaluate the suitability of these varieties for the Australian market. Only a small number of varieties of bitter melon are currently grown in Australia, with the most common variety known as 'Moonlight'.

"Bitter melon is currently a small market in Australia and our initial work indicates that there is room for more varieties, including those that may appeal to the mainstream such as 'White', which is more attractive and has reduced bitterness," Dr Parks said.

Further research is also proposed to look specifically at bitter melon quality.

"It is early days yet but we are collaborating with the University of Newcastle to examine the active constituents of different bitter melon varieties," Dr Parks said.

"This means focusing on the compounds of the vegetable known to be beneficial to our health." **va**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Researchers from Industry and Investment NSW are focusing on increasing the production of bitter melon.
- Traditionally grown in the Northern Territory, researchers are using greenhouse technology to evaluate the viability of growing the vegetable in temperate areas such as northern NSW.
- Research is ongoing but initial findings show that new varieties may appeal to Australian consumers.

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Example of a Bitter Melon hydro basement

Asian vegetable profile:

Bitter Melon



Momordica charantia

Otherwise known as bitter gourd, cerasee, caraili

Background

Bitter melon is a tropical and subtropical vine of the family *Cucurbitaceae*, which is among the most bitter of all vegetables. They are seldom mixed with other vegetables due to the strong bitter taste, although this can be moderated to some extent by salting and then washing the cut melon before use.

Bitter melon (*Momordica charantia*) is actually a member of the squash family and resembles a cucumber with bumpy skin. When first picked, a bitter melon is yellow-green, but as it ripens, it turns to a yellow-orange color. The inside of the melon is filled with fibrous seeds.

Preparation and cooking

Bitter melon is often used in Chinese and Vietnamese

cooking for its bitter flavor, especially in stir-fries (often with pork) and also in soups. It is also a popular vegetable in Indian cooking, where it is often prepared with potatoes and served with yogurt on the side to offset the bitterness.

Bitter melon has been recognised as a Chinese herbal medicine for diabetes mellitus for centuries.

The best unblemished melons are from five to 12 inches in length. Melons that are still green are more bitter in flavour, where as a yellow-orange melon has a milder taste. Bitter melons are available fresh from April to September in most Asian markets and can occasionally be found in larger supermarkets. Some markets are beginning to carry bitter melons year round. They may also be purchased canned or dried. **va**



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Nutrient labelling for fruit and vegetables: what's required?

Understanding the current regulations surrounding food labelling will help the vegetable industry develop marketing campaigns that abide by the strict guidelines set by FSANZ, writes Jenny Jobling.

It is in the best interests of the horticultural industry to encourage people to eat more fresh produce, which may be achieved by introducing labelling which highlights the key health-promoting nutrients found in fruit and vegetables. Consumers are usually aware of the general health benefits of fresh vegetables but reminding them at the point of purchase may encourage increased consumption.

The initial aim of a current project is to clarify the use of the labelling laws in relation to vegetables. Though the project focuses on packaged baby leaf spinach and rocket in particular — aiming to collect data that will substantiate a new health or nutrient claim label for these products — understanding the guidelines is the first step and is important to all commodities.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) have set guidelines and regulations that define what is allowed on a food label. FSANZ plays a pivotal role in ensuring labelling is consistent and that consumers are protected against companies making misleading claims in relation to a food product. The guidelines are enforced by State Government food authorities who investigate complaints about food labels and food safety.

Current state of play

At present, nutrient content and nutrient function claims for foods are generally permitted. However, with the exception of labels relating to folate and birth defects, claims about health enhancement or reduction of risk of diseases are not permitted.

For example, a general statement such as, "This product is a natural source of antioxidants which may reduce the risk of cancer" is not allowed

to be used. Yet, the statement "This product is a natural source of the antioxidants vitamins A and C that help protect cells from oxidative damage" is allowed.

The first statement is considered too broad and currently there is not enough evidence to prove that it is unconditionally true. The second statement differs because it is factual; it is true that vitamins A and C do serve the biological role of being antioxidants that protect against oxidative cell damage.

Any claim that is made about a specific disease or health outcome must be approved by FSANZ before it can be used. But because of their strict guidelines, it is very difficult to collect enough evidence to substantiate a health claim related specifically to a reduction or improvement in a disease outcome.

So at present, labels for fruit and vegetables focus on the nutritional content they contain. Nutrition tables established by nutritionists outline the amounts of specific foods we need for a balanced diet. These levels are known as Nutrient Reference Values and are available on the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) website www.nrv.gov.au/nutrients/index.htm

The tables define the recommended daily intake (RDI) for a balanced diet and include, for example, such

things as the amount of energy (Kilojoules; kj), the amount of carbohydrate, protein, vitamin C, vitamin A, minerals and other nutrients we need to achieve our RDI.

Food labels that make nutrient claims must base the claim on the amount of a specific nutrient that one serve of that food provides at the time of consumption. Fruit and vegetables are classified as "sources of" or "good sources of" specific vitamins, for example. To be a "source of", one average serve of the product must contain at least 10 per cent of the recommended daily intake of the vitamin (10 per cent RDI). To be a "good source of", the product must contain at least 25 per cent of

the RDI.

A database of nutrient information which can be found on the FSANZ website titled NUTTAB 2006 www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumerinformation/nuttab2006/. This database contains information on the nutrient content of approximately 2600 foods — many of which are fruit and vegetables — and up to 169 nutrients per food.

The database is based on information gathered between 1983 and 1998 which raises the possibility that with new varieties





“These new guidelines will mean it is more difficult to substantiate general claims related to antioxidants.”

being grown and better handling, the amount of vitamins and minerals might be higher now.

The database does, however, make available specific nutrients a fruit or vegetable contains and compares that value to the RDI requirements. We can then see if a fruit or vegetable contains more than 10 per cent, or more than 25 per cent, of the RDI for a particular nutrient, and thus whether a “source of” or “good source of” claim can be made for that product.

It is important to remember that the claims relate to the level of nutrients at the time of consumption and these levels do decline after harvest and with time in storage.

What about antioxidants

Fruit and vegetables are known natural sources of antioxidants and current promotional activities often focus on the protective role they play in relation to our health.

Claims such as “A natural source of antioxidants – to help keep your body healthy” or “is a source of antioxidants which will help protect the body against free radical damage” are currently permitted.

However, with new FSANZ guidelines expected to be introduced at the end of 2010, these claims will no longer be permitted. The new guidelines for “Biologically Active Substances” require the manufacturer/producer to define the daily reference quantity (RDI) of the bioactive substance (specific antioxidant) relating to the claim. They must also provide evidence that the level of that substance in the food is above 10 per cent of the recommended level.

In the new guidelines, biologically active substances refer to dietary substances that are not traditionally recognised as ‘nutrients’, but which are associated with health effects (for example, flavonoids, carotenoids, co-enzymes, phytoestrogens, ‘antioxidants’). Currently, these substances do not have officially recommended reference intakes (RDIs).

FSANZ states that “To demonstrate the required reference intake for a biologically active substance, requires a structured scientific approach, including evidence of suitable quality and evidence substantiating the amount of substance required to be consumed per day to achieve the specific health effect.”

These new guidelines will mean it is more difficult to substantiate general claims

related to antioxidants, if the particular antioxidant is not already a component of the recommended daily intake tables.

Using the resources detailed above, it is possible to develop nutrient claim labels for many horticultural products.

Understanding the guidelines allows us to develop the best possible health messages which may encourage the consumption of more fruit and vegetables for the benefit of the consumer’s health, as well as the industry’s!

Acknowledgement: This article is a component of HAL Project VG08148: Developing a nutrient and/or health claim label for packaged baby leaf spinach and rocket. Funds were provided by HAL and Harvest Freshcuts, part of the OneHarvest group. The Australian Government provides matched funds for all of HAL’s R&D activities. [va](#)



THE BOTTOM LINE

- Understanding current food guidelines can help the vegetable industry make better nutritional claims on labels.
- An FSANZ database makes information regarding nutrition in relation to horticultural products available for the industry to use and achieve the best results while remaining within the guidelines.
- Strict guidelines will be introduced later this year regarding broad health-related claims concerning antioxidants.

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Growers on tour

Australian vegetable growers return with the inside knowledge from their international counterparts, writes Mignonne Rawson.

Australian growers returned in February from a Grower Tour to Israel, Berlin and Spain, with a wealth of information and new ideas that they hope to utilise on their own properties.

The growers ranging from 27 to 70 years of age and hailing from all corners of Australia left bound for Israel on January 27. The 18-day tour included visits to various farms, greenhouses, packing facilities, merchants, markets and co-operatives in both the southern parts of Israel and Spain, as well as a special visit to the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair in Berlin, Germany.

The tour included many valuable and informative farm visits but also allowed tour participants invaluable networking opportunities, which all agreed was an essential part of the tour.

"It was great to see how the rest of the world operates and a great networking opportunity. I'd recommend any grower attend such a tour," said tour participant Richard Haynes.

Exploring Israel

Led by AUSVEG Chief Executive

Officer, Richard Mulcahy, the first stop on the itinerary was Israel, where participants began a four day tour through the southern half of the country.

Participants first visited Arava Valley, venturing close to growing areas near the Dead Sea. The growers also visited greenhouses that had been declared clean fruit fly areas, which support exports destined for the USA and Japan. Growers learnt how sterilisation techniques are being employed on fruit flies.

The tour also included a visit to co-operatives, in particular, farms using greenhouses. These co-operatives were mostly comprised of organic growers who use sterilised compost to avoid nematode issues that arise through the use of raw manures.

This part of the tour showed growers how greenhouses work in the middle of the desert and the way the growers deal with water shortages.

The group then visited the Avacal Research Station where they saw new developments in growing methods, new irrigation and water control methods, as



[From left] VGA President Luis Gazzola and Boomaroo Nurseries' Eric Jacometti at the 2010 Fruit Logistica Convention in Berlin



Syngenta facility in Spain



The Old City in Jerusalem



Tour group in a factory in Israel

well as irrigation solutions for water with high salinity. The last part of the Israel tour was a visit to the Netafim offices and the Research and Production Factory, where the first Netafim irrigation dripper was invented in 1945. The Netafim Research and Production Factory is the biggest drip irrigation manufacturer in the world.

Brilliant Berlin

Tour participants travelled to busy Berlin, Germany to attend Fruit Logistica, a leading international trade fair for fresh produce businesses.

Fruit Logistica brought together more than 2,000 companies from across the fresh produce value chain internationally and the fair was hailed as the highlight of the tour by growers.

Luis Gazzola, President of the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria, who was a participant on the grower tour, said the Fruit Logistica Trade Fair was one of the most valuable parts of the trip.

“The conference 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

“ It was a great mix of people from all ages and backgrounds. I made some terrific friendships and learned so much as well. ”

was incredible.”

Fruit Logistica, which took place from 3 - 5 February, is considered the most important business and communication arena for international fresh produce, with key decision makers, international leaders in agribusi-

ness, 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

countries,” said Mr Gazzola.

Searching through Spain

After Berlin, the growers travelled on to Spain where they continued their farm visits in the southern part of the country.

Highlights included a visit to fresh produce co-operative Surinver; the largest co-operative in the area. Participants visited testing and research fields, installations, packing houses and viewed production processes. Surinver is the national leader in capsicum production with 39 million kg produced per year. Surinver also distributes more than 40 million lettuces per year, along with a variety of fruit and citrus products.

Another highlight during their time in Spain was a visit to one of the largest lettuce growing operations in the country, where nearly 2,000,000 lettuce plants are planted every week. The lettuce farm is a 3,000 hectare enterprise and is owned by two brothers, who grow iceberg, cos and mini cos lettuces. They export 70 per cent of the yield to Europe and Asia, while 30 per

growing community and explore almost 2000 exhibitions from around the world.

“Every grower would benefit from attending such a conference; it was a great eye opener to see how vegetables are being grown in other



VGA Vic President Luis Gazzola

cent is consumed locally. The enterprise includes 500 hectares of lettuce farms in China for export to England during summer.

Tour participants also visited organic onion growing areas and packing houses through contacts

which were made at Fruit Logistica. The group was also lucky enough to be given a presentation by the John Deere Water CropSense Technology team, which represents a suite of integrated crop management products allowing growers to monitor the levels of moisture and nutrients in soil.

Returning to Madrid, the growers concluded the tour with a visit to the Madrid Wholesale Market.

According to the growers who attended the tour, it was an enormous success.

Tour member Eric Jacometti, who is planning to keep in contact with every person who participated, said it was a fantastic few weeks.

“It was a great mix of people from all ages and backgrounds. I made some terrific friendships and just had a terrific time,” he said.

The tour was facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG and was funded by the National Vegetable Levy. The Australian Government provides

matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities. [va](#)

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Australian growers have returned after a successful grower tour to Israel, Germany and Spain which concluded in February.
- In Germany, the growers attended Fruit Logistica, a leading international trade fair for fresh produce businesses.
- Growers visited farms across Spain and southern Israel, learning valuable farming techniques from their international counterparts.

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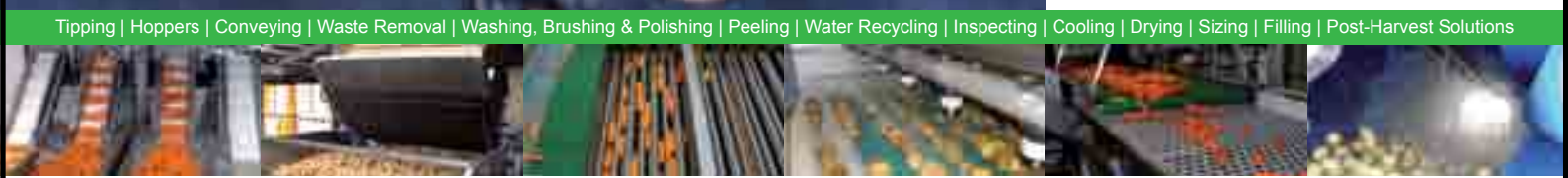


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VEGINSIGHTS: The Market Q4 2009

'VEGINSIGHTS: *The Market*', the first quarterly report developed as part of the Consumers and Markets sub-program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP), has just been released. Breaking new ground for the vegetable industry, the report provides informative market definitions, quantifications — and insights into vegetable market and consumer behaviour for the December quarter 2009, writes Andrew White.

Australian vegetable growers and service providers operating in supply chains supporting vegetable producers are set to benefit from access to the inaugural vegetable industry quarterly report, VEGINSIGHTS: *The Market* Q4 2009 ('*The Market*').

The Market, which profiles consumer and market behaviour from October-December 2009, has been developed by freshlogic — a market analysis and consulting firm specialising in food and agribusiness— as part of the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP).

It is anticipated that the report will be a valuable new resource for growers, enabling a better understanding of consumers and markets, and in the long term, facilitating better-informed and more market-focused decision making by vegetable growing businesses.

"This report will define and map out the market in a level of detail that growers haven't had before. At the same time, it will profile the relevant strengths of

the different distribution channels," freshlogic Director Martin Kneebone said. One of the main aims of *TheMarket* is to provide some settings for ongoing market analysis by growers.

The Market will be developed by freshlogic after the first three quarters of each year, with a final report at the end of the year to include analysis of quarter four, combined with a broader annual review and outlook.

"This should help growers and their supply chains to plan how they develop new products, select and manage their distribution channels, and understand their own performance against the market," Mr Kneebone said.

Among its many potential uses, the information provided in the report can be utilised by growers and the supply chain in accessing market, channel and category performances, guiding production forecasting, guiding business planning, and in making improved product development decisions.

Supermarkets vs greengrocers

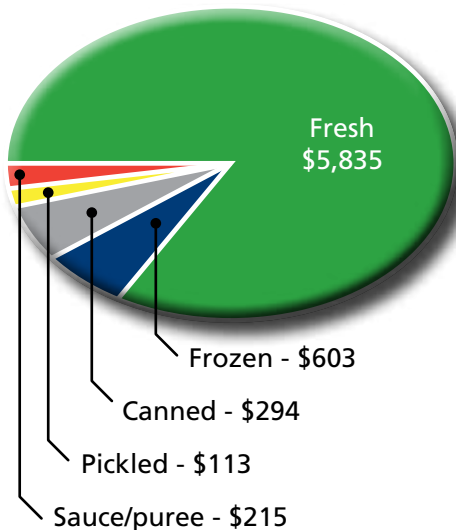
The annual value of domestic vegetable retail sales is \$7.05 billion according to *The Market*. This comprises \$5.83 billion in fresh product sales and \$1.22 billion in processed vegetable product sales. The supermarkets category is dominated by Woolworths, Coles and Supa-IGA, which operate over 1,900 full service supermarkets, while discount retailer Aldi, who entered the market in 2002, has expanded its reach to 230 stores.

Although 'specialists' such as greengrocers and local markets are becoming a popular source of fresh produce, with reasons including 'better quality' and 'better range' amongst the key explanations provided by consumers, supermarkets are still the dominant channel for the wholesale fresh vegetable market. Supermarkets have a 49.5% market share by volume

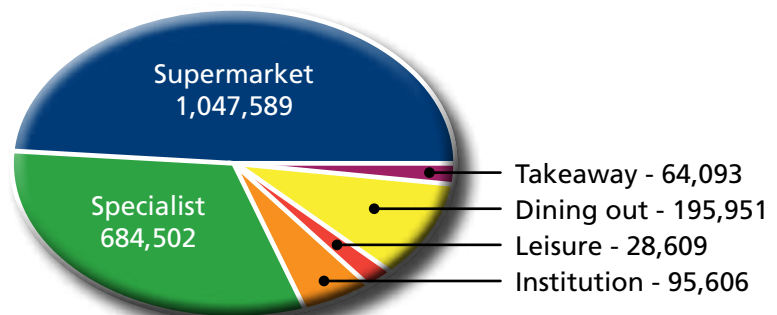


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Total vegetable retail market value
\$7.05B annual value (\$M)



Wholesale fresh vegetable market
2.12B tonnes by channel



Channel market shares of fresh vegetables into the domestic market include:

Supermarkets	49.5%	Dining out	9.3%
Specialists	32.3%	Leisure	1.4%
Takeaway	3.0%	Institution	4.5%



of the wholesale fresh vegetable market, compared to specialists at 32% and foodservice channels at 18% according to *The Market*.

In the retail or 'take home' vegetable market, which excludes 'foodservice' channels such as takeaway outlets, major supermarkets have a 63% or \$3.6 billion national share of the market. Specialists like greengrocers, by comparison, have a 37% or \$2.1 billion market share.

The Market suggests that specialist outlets are well-positioned to compete with supermarkets and gives every indication that they will be able to sustain this position.

Consumer behaviour

Interestingly, *The Market* shows that consumers appear inclined to switch between greengrocers and supermarkets to obtain the best possible price, with 32% of supermarket shoppers also buying from a greengrocer. Meanwhile, 25% of households use greengrocers as their primary outlet for purchasing vegetables and use

supermarkets to top-up.

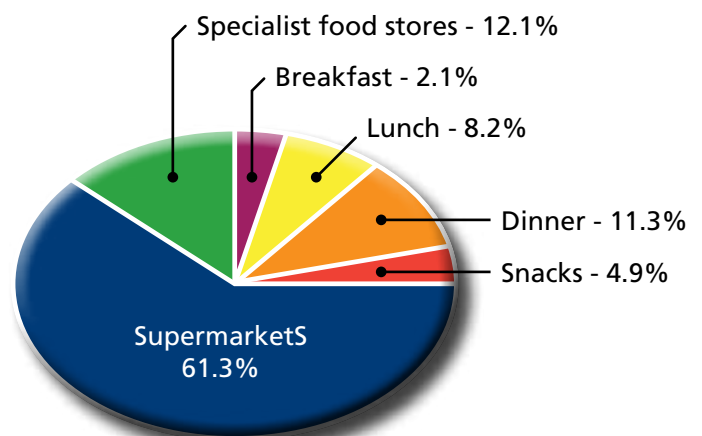
The Market profiles the proportion of specific supermarket shoppers that also buy vegetables from a market or greengrocer. Aldi clocks up the highest proportion, with 63% of its customers purchasing vegetables elsewhere, followed by Woolworths at 46%, Coles at 40% and IGA at 39%.

The Market also reveals we are shopping much more regularly than in the past, with consumers making six to seven shopping trips per week in order to meet their food requirements. The report explains that trip frequency appears to be driven by the perishable nature of produce, while extended supermarket shopping hours may also be a contributing factor.

Market performance

"Building marketplace advantages in the fresh domestic market is gaining importance as processed products experience increased global competition," *The Market* states. Underpinning this assertion, in the four year period

**Food Spend per Week
Average in 4th quarter**



between 2004/05 and 2008/09, vegetable exports have fallen by 1.6% according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), while imports have risen by more than 80%.

Despite only contributing 12.7% of retail vegetables sales, frozen and canned vegetable products enjoy a high advertising exposure at 47% because they are supported by dedicated marketing resources. At a retail level, the price received per kilogram for frozen products is \$4.11, compared with canned products at \$2.95 per kilogram and fresh at \$3.54 per kilogram.

Household segments

Understanding the dimension and nature of various household segments can establish a platform for new product development and distribution. *The Market* organises households into five major segments — Empty Nesters, Established Families, Singles and Couples with High or Low Incomes, and Budgeting Families.

According to *The Market*, the

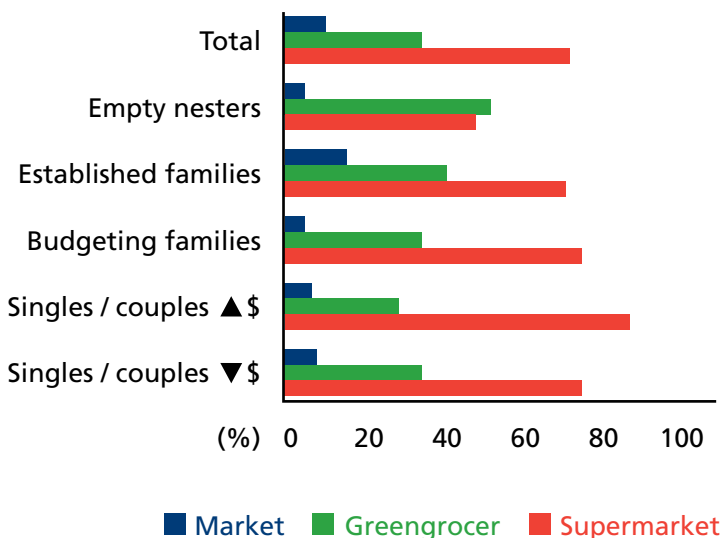
drivers of food spend are the number of people per household, available discretionary dollars and lifestyle influences which impact the amount people eat away from home.

Variations in spending habits range from Empty Nesters who spend 26-28% of their food spend on eating away from home compared to Singles and Couples with Higher Incomes who spend 37-41% on food which is eaten away from home.

Food eaten away from home had declined from 29.5% in December 2008 to 27.1% in 2009. According to *The Market*, this shows that a significant 'share of stomach' had shifted from foodservice to retail outlets, with the global financial crisis likely to have had some impact as some consumers' moved to reduce their food expenditure.

The food spend on specialist food stores such as Fruiterers, Butchers, Bakers, and Delis increased from 10.5% to 12% in the last quarter of 2009. *The Market* reveals it is clear consumers shifted their buying to where they felt they

Fresh vegetable retailer used



could capture value and be assured of quality.

The proportion of households purchasing vegetables ranged from a low 56% for Singles & Couples with Higher Incomes to a high 85% for Established Families. Buying patterns profiled in *The Market* show that around 80% of food shoppers are female, with 76% of females purchasing vegetables compared to 64% of males. The use of supermarkets varies by segment, with convenience seekers like Singles & Couples with a Higher Income at 87% through to the Empty Nesters who have the time to shop around at a low of 50%.

The MasterChef affect

Cooking is the dominant method of vegetable preparation with

over 89% of households steaming, boiling, roasting, or stir frying vegetables.

While, as *The Market* explains, one of the positives associated with frozen vegetables is the minimum preparation time, many consumers' clearly have a new attitude towards food preparation thanks to television programs like *MasterChef*. This program in particular has raised consumer awareness for high quality fresh food, which will clearly be beneficial for local vegetable growers.

The Market finds that with cooking at home increasing in popularity and shows like *MasterChef* demonstrating new recipes and skills, the overall demand for high quality and varied fresh vegetables can only be beneficial to the industry. **va**

“ Building marketplace advantages in the fresh domestic market is gaining importance as processed products experience increased global competition. ”

In summary

This article has provided only a brief snapshot of *The Market*, and barely scratches the surface of the detailed analysis of the vegetable market and consumer behaviour contained in the full report.

VEGINSIGHTS: *The Market* Q4 2009 can be downloaded online now from the AUSVEG Grower Portal and key sections will also be profiled over coming weeks via the weekly VEGINSIGHTS e-newsletter.

The report is available free of charge to all vegetable levy payers and service providers who operate in supply chains supporting vegetable producers, from www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers.

The Consumers and Markets sub-program of the VIDP is funded through Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

It is recommended those seeking to act on the basis of the information provided in the quarterly report first obtain independent professional advice.

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Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Or visit:
www.ausveg.com/levypayers
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A rebounding economy: but what's in it for vegetable growers?

Industry Economist Ian James from the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) looks at the recovering Australian economy, and the effect it will have on vegetable growers.

Australia withstood the full impact of the global financial crisis and the subsequent world economic recession better than most expected. Appropriate domestic policy responses and similar actions in key Asian economies, underpinned the return to continuing economic growth. Throughout it all, consumer and business confidence remained high. Nonetheless, economic growth slowed considerably as credit conditions remained tight and future investment plans were put on hold. Economic growth slowed from 4% in 2007 to 1% in 2008 and remained at this

rate for much of 2009. As we proceed through 2010, economic indicators suggest that a broadly based economic recovery is well underway. Official forecasts are for economic growth to accelerate to 3.25% over 2010, but economic data released since those forecasts has led some economists to suggest that economic growth will be running at an annualised rate of over 4% by the end of 2010. This is boom time economic growth. But will this predicted rapid bounce-back benefit

vegetable growers? To answer this question we need to understand the economic forces driving the return to strong growth. Will they lead to increased demand for vegetables? Will the economic growth that they deliver assist vegetable growers' businesses? Will policy reactions to these changed economic circumstances be beneficial to vegetable growers?

Key driver of the recovery

The economic recovery will be driven from overseas with the worst of the global

recession over. The recovery in key economies, namely the USA, Europe and Japan will be gradual. Unlike Australia, and most Asian economies, these economies are burdened with huge public debts, impaired financial institutions, weakened businesses and high unemployment. The prospects throughout most of Asia are in stark contrast. We are seeing the beginning of a major economic power shift towards Asia and Australia stands as a major beneficiary. Some recovery in the "old" economic powerhouses and strong growth rates in Asia will boost demand for





Australian resources. This increased demand from overseas will have a twofold effect. Firstly, large increases in the prices received for key exports and in particular, coal and iron ore, will boost national income significantly. Secondly, increased demand will lead to rapid expansion in the development of resource projects in Australia and business investment will respond accordingly.

Impact on vegetable growers

This concentration on resource projects and business investment will have little direct impact on the vegetable industry. Economic growth will be driven by the corporate sector. In general, corporate Australia is in great shape. Recapitalisation, improved cost efficiency, healthy profits and low levels of debt characterise the sector. The resources boom will assist with increased demand and eventually the boost to national income and the benefits from expanded corporate investment will flow through the economy.

But the health of the small business sector and households is more important to the vegetable industry. Currently conditions in the small business sector are much less robust than in corporate Australia and consumers are likely to be much more circumspect in their spending than in the recent past.

Bankruptcies and delinquency rates amongst small businesses are likely to increase throughout 2010, as banks pull the plug on firms they supported through the economic downturn. Credit criteria are much tighter than before the global financial crisis and access to it is harder to obtain. Small businesses along the vegetable supply chain are being adversely affected, and for example, debtor days have

blown out. Despite the overall improvement in the economy these conditions are unlikely to change anytime soon. Vegetable growers may find it more difficult to access cheap credit and should pay particular attention to cash flow.

Australian consumers assisted by government handouts carried the economy through the worst of the economic downturn. There was an element of relief spending in that Australia avoided recession, the predicted unemployment did not occur, share prices recovered and house prices boomed. Economic indicators suggest that employment will grow strongly over 2010 which should underpin consumer expenditure. But although consumers are likely to keep their jobs, they will now have to

allow the corporate sector to take up the running on the economy. Though it is an election year, there is unlikely to be tax cuts and other measures aimed at boosting consumer expenditure. The Reserve Bank of Australia will increase interest rates in an attempt to prevent the boost to national income and investment spending triggering inflation. Household debt is at high levels, so even small increases in interest rates will curb expenditure. The jury is still out on where house prices are headed. Economists point out the shortage of supply as the factor driving house prices higher. However, affordability is now a big issue and it is difficult to see the buoyancy in house prices continuing. None of this will be positive for consumer expenditure on vegetables.

“Vegetable growers may find it more difficult to access cheap credit and should pay particular attention to cash flow.”

rely on their own resources and they are showing a tendency to use greater caution in their spending. Vegetables have an advantage over other items in the consumer budget in that they are seen as a core purchase. But consumers are likely to be price conscious and seek value-for-money in their vegetable purchases.

Policy responses

Policy responses to the economic recovery will be negative for vegetable consumption. Government expenditure will tighten as the government moves aside to

tightened which will remove a potential safety valve.

Conclusion.

Despite accelerating economic growth, vegetable growers are unlikely to notice any improvement in the economic environment they operate in. If anything, the economic conditions that directly affect them and the industry will be worse, as consumers become more cautious, interest rates rise and labour pressures mount. Management of cash flow and close attention to costs will remain paramount. **va**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Australia's economic recovery looks set to continue with all indicators forecasting growth in the short term.
- Vegetable growers are unlikely to notice any improvement in the economic environment they operate in, due to the more stable nature of the small business sector.
- As consumers become more cautious, interest rates rise and labour pressures mount, growers must manage their cash flow carefully and pay close attention to rising costs.

i Ian James is project leader for the Economics Sub Program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP).

Higher interest rates will also adversely impact on vegetable growers' debt position and their ability to finance expansion and investment in critical labour saving machinery costs.

Other impacts on vegetable growers

The factors driving the economic recovery will once again create problems in rural Australia. The resources boom will require labour and thus labour costs will be driven up.

The easing of labour shortages in rural Australia in recent times will be reversed. Immigration policies are being

In other economic news, AUSVEG has completed an analysis of the Henry Tax Review, including its implications for vegetable growers, following a special pre-release briefing. This analysis can be found in the AUSVEG Grower Portal.

Victoria



Horticultural Skills Training relevant to Vegetable Growing

The major growing areas for vegetables in Victoria are Werribee, Bacchus Marsh and Keilor in the west and Cranbourne, Somerville, Boneo, Bairnsdale and Lindenow in the south eastern area of Victoria. Although both State and Commonwealth Governments promote the virtues of education and training, it would appear that growers may no longer have the choice of 'vegetable-specific' off-site training for their employees. In December 2008 the Gordon

TAFE moved from the Werribee campus back to Geelong. Since that time, VGA Vic has made every effort to encourage a training provider to continue the much needed 'vegetable-specific' industry training at the Werribee Campus. The State Government and a potential training provider had negotiated for a six month lease to use the existing training facilities, but the training provider has recently withdrawn from any further discussion on the subject. This is a great disappointment to the VGA, who over the past 40 years has provided representation and support to training institutions who have played an important role in making vegetable growing training for apprentices and trainees available in Victoria. This has been to the benefit of the future development of the industry and

will now be sorely missed. Changes to training methods and technology over the past 10 years have encouraged the development and funding of 'on-farm' training facilities by registered training organisations. In considering the specific training needs of their staff and what is best for their farms, growers should still have the choice of the two forms of training that are currently available, in areas that are accessible and at an affordable cost.

Victorian Vegetable Industrial Development Officers

The introduction by the Victorian DPI of the Horticultural Industry Network Project (HIN) provided VGA Vic with funding to appoint part time Industry Development Officers (IDO), to cover the eastern and western vegetable growing districts of

Victoria. After six months in operation, the network programme has proved very effective in restoring on-farm contact with vegetable growers. Victorian Vegetable IDO contacts are Ken Orr (West) and Slobodan Vujovic (East) and they have been very active over the past three months in communicating with vegetable growers and industry suppliers. Their contact details may be obtained from the VGA office. For the latest vegetable information for Victoria take a look at our web site: www.vegetablesvictoria.com.au or www.vgavic.org.au

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South Australia



State Coverage Complete

With the opening of a third regional office in Mt Gambier, Grow SA Ltd has now achieved a full coverage of South Australia's horticultural zones. With the Virginia Horticulture Centre housing the head office of Grow SA, services are now available directly through its regional presence in the Riverland, Murraylands and south east of the State. To complement this development Grow SA is keen to finalise the establishment of Regional Councils in all these regions. This will mean that individual regional issues are more effectively communicated to the General Council and addressed on behalf of industry. Any growers interested in sitting on their Regional Council or the statewide Policy Council are urged to contact their local Grow SA office or phone Trina Keves in Virginia on 08 8282 9200. Regional Councils allow Grow SA to ensure grower

issues are dealt with effectively at State level and /or passed on to AUSVEG or the Industry Advisory Committee. The latest road show to travel the State is dealing with the implementation of, and grower responsibilities associated with the new Horticulture Award 2010. These road shows have been well supported by growers across the State and are presented by Grow SA in conjunction with the Office of the Workplace Ombudsman. Information packs for growers who were not able to attend are available from any of the Grow SA offices. Grow SA welcomes a new addition to the team with the recent appointment of Candy Michaelis who has joined Grow SA as Business Development Manager. Based in Virginia, Candy brings with her some new and vibrant ideas that will add value to Grow SA membership across the State.

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Western Australia



WA consumers to suffer after growers hit by severe hail storm

WA vegetable growers north of Perth were hit hard by a hail storm that will cost WA consumers for weeks to come. The freak storm that hit Perth in late March has caused millions of dollars worth of damage to crops located north of Perth in the Carabooda and West Gingin areas. vegetablesWA Executive Officer, Jim Turley, said that the hail storm was a "catastrophic disaster" for the areas of Carabooda and West Gingin. "As a result of the severe hail storm, growers' immediate concerns relate to cash flow and retaining their employees," he said. "Millions of dollars have been lost particularly in lettuce, celery, tomatoes and to a lesser extent cabbage. As a consequence of this, the local retail market has risen substantially for those products, which is flowing through to

consumers." According to Mr Turley, it has been a devastating blow for growers who may take months to recover. "It might be three to four months before affected growers could expect any cash flow," he said. vegetablesWA through the Minister of Agriculture & Food have approached the Australian Attorney General for an immediate cash grant for affected growers without success. "There are National Disaster Relief Funds available but in terms of improving their immediate cash flow this fund is not suitable in a lot of cases for our growers," Mr Turley said. Prices for vegetables have skyrocketed as a result with lettuces jumping from an average of \$1.50 each to \$5.00 each and cabbage, tomatoes and celery also increasing in price.

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AROUND THE STATES

New South Wales



How NSW balances land uses on the city fringe with urban development is one of the major issues facing us in the horticulture sector. In late 2005, the NSW Government released its Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney to 2031, entitled *City of Cities: A Plan for Sydney's Future*.

The Department of Planning has now released a discussion paper, *Sydney Towards 2036*, which will inform a scheduled five-year review of the Metropolitan Strategy. The Metropolitan Strategy review is likely to impact on vegetable production in the Sydney region with the need for 770,000 additional homes by 2036 and population forecasted to reach 6 million by 2036 (an increase of 1.7 million since 2006). A focus of the discussion

paper is balancing land uses on the city fringe. Consultation on this discussion paper was undertaken in April and NSW Farmers' Association prepared a submission. Additionally the Association is represented on the Sydney Agriculture Reference Group — which provides input to Industry and Investment NSW and Planning NSW — with regards to the priorities for agriculture and horticulture in the Sydney Region.

Flying Foxes

Flying Foxes are continuing to plague the industry. They've long been an issue for orchardists in the Sydney Region and the Association has spear-headed the campaign for State Government assistance to net orchards.

Flying Foxes have now moved west in large numbers and are causing significant damage in the Central West of NSW. Given this, we are calling for urgent assistance from the NSW Gov-

ernment to control this inland spread, and help us understand why they have come.

We are also calling on all regional communities in NSW to report any sightings immediately to give us an ongoing understanding of where they are spreading to. We are hopeful that cooler weather will move these coastal animals on, but it is highly likely that they will be back again in warmer weather. We need to be prepared. To report any sightings of Flying Foxes call Peter Myler at the National Parks & Wildlife Service on 02 6332 7641 or email peter.myler@environment.nsw.gov.au.

In some good news, the Association recently appointed Alison Anderson to the position of Senior Policy Officer in the field of Horticulture and Agricultural Chemicals. Alison has worked in the vegetable industry for over ten years and was the NSW Vegetable Industry Officer (IDO), based at the Association, from 2000 – 2007. She

continued part-time in the role until the completion of the IDO project in mid 2009. In 2007 Alison joined Arris Pty Ltd where she was involved in a number of vegetable industry projects including: Project Officer for the AUSVEG Environmental Management Systems Project; Editor for the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Vegetable Farms Ute Guide and DVD; Project Leader for three Think Tank projects with the objective of identifying priority R&D issues for brassica, leafy and root vegetables.

We're looking forward to using Alison's skill base to address the aforementioned issues and the challenges that arise in our industry.

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Horticulture Committee
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Queensland



Good response from Queensland veggie growers to Reef Rescue program

Growcom and a number of regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups have commenced discussions with the Federal Government to secure increased funding for round three of the Reef Rescue program. This will hopefully result in incentive dollars equivalent to that delivered in both rounds one and two, vastly increasing growers' chances of receiving some funding for their water quality projects. Round three is expected to open in June 2010.

Horticulture growers located in catchments impacting on the Great Barrier Reef have already responded well to the uptake of improved practices via incentive

funding from the Federal Government. At the completion of round two incentives, the NRM bodies involved had received approximately 160 applications seeking a joint investment of \$2,331,000.

From this pool of applications, 83 projects have been funded a total \$1.2 million, resulting in an average investment by participating growers of \$1.60 for every \$1 invested by the Federal Government.

Approved projects have included implementation of:

- Improved irrigation systems and monitoring units to reduce deep drainage/run-off and to improve application and timing
- Advanced chemical application systems to reduce losses and target specific issues
- Improved fertiliser application systems to increase efficiency of application and plant uptake
- Improved inter-row management and sediment control to reduce soil loss and thus nutrient and chemical losses from the farming system
- GPS tracking systems, bed

formers and mulching machines to improve soil health, reduce compaction and reduce the reliance on chemicals.

As a direct result of Reef Rescue, 310 Growcom Farm Management Systems - Water Quality modules have been completed by growers. The FMS process provides direction and support for growers' decision-making to ensure they are addressing areas of highest risk within their farming system. In many cases the risk assessment process gave growers new ideas for projects to improve water quality through better management practice changes.

Collated results across the regions from the Growcom FMS WQ module indicate that horticulture growers still need to improve their nutrient budgeting practices, crop benchmarking and use of scheduling tools. To assist growers in these areas, Growcom is delivering nutrient management, chemical management and precision agriculture training in Bundaberg, Bowen, Burdekin, Wet Tropics

and Atherton Tablelands.

An example of this was a Growcom facilitated training day in March in Bundaberg to assist growers in interpreting soil analysis data and to develop nutrient budget planning processes. Growers were invited to bring along soil tests from their own property for interpretation. The day also included a demonstration of a new on-line program that aims to improve nutrient budgeting and recording. The training day was well supported by growers who appreciated the opportunity to learn more about nutrient management techniques relevant to their farming operation.

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Tasmania



New TFGA Vegetable Council Chairman

Andrew Craigie has been announced as the new Vegetable Council Chairman. Mr Craigie farms two properties, Heathermoor and Springbanks, between Latrobe and Sassafras. The properties produce peas, beans, pyrethrum, poppies, onions, potatoes, seed crops, sheep and cattle.

Mr Craigie took over the position from Nietta farmer Keeton Miles, following the council's Annual General Meeting on 29

March 2010. Mr Craigie said he had been driven to seek the chairmanship of the council because he wanted to do more to entice young people into leadership roles within the TFGA and the industry. He completed a vegetable industry strategic planning course last year.

Mr Craigie represents the next generation of vegetable growers. The TFGA has to have constant renewal if we are to keep abreast of the global dynamics of rural industries. We have to look to the future and Mr Craigie is part of that future.

Accc Agreement Reauthorised

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has made a draft decision to

reauthorise collective bargaining arrangements for Tasmanian vegetable growers, as proposed by the TFGA.

It is an extension of the arrangement that has been in place since 2004 in which TFGA members have been able to collectively negotiate the terms and conditions of vegetable growing contracts with McCain Foods and Simplot. The authorisation also covers TFGA members negotiating with any new vegetable processors entering the Tasmanian market.

The ACCC Chairman considers that the collective bargaining arrangements are likely to continue to be of benefit, particularly through providing the opportunity for

increased grower input into contracts.

Participation in the collective negotiations is voluntary for both vegetable growers and processors. The ACCC grants such an authorisation when it is satisfied that the public benefit from the conduct outweighs any public detriment.

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Commodities Manager
Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association
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Launceston, Tas 7250
Phone: 03 6332 1800
Fax: 03 6331 4344

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

27 - 30 May

AUSVEG National Convention 2010

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

Jupiters Hotel-Casino, Gold Coast, Queensland

For more information:

Phone: AUSVEG on 03 9822 0388

28 May

2:30-3:00pm – Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting

Surfers Paradise Room, The Pavillion, Jupiters Hotel-Casino, Broadbeach Island, Gold Coast, Queensland

For more information:

Phone: AUSVEG on 03 9822 0388

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

September 2010

8 – 10 September

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