

vegetables australia

May/June 2011

Staggering Success

2011 AUSVEG National
Convention

Growing with change

Denise Ellement

Finding strength in the
heritage of farming

Senator Barnaby Joyce

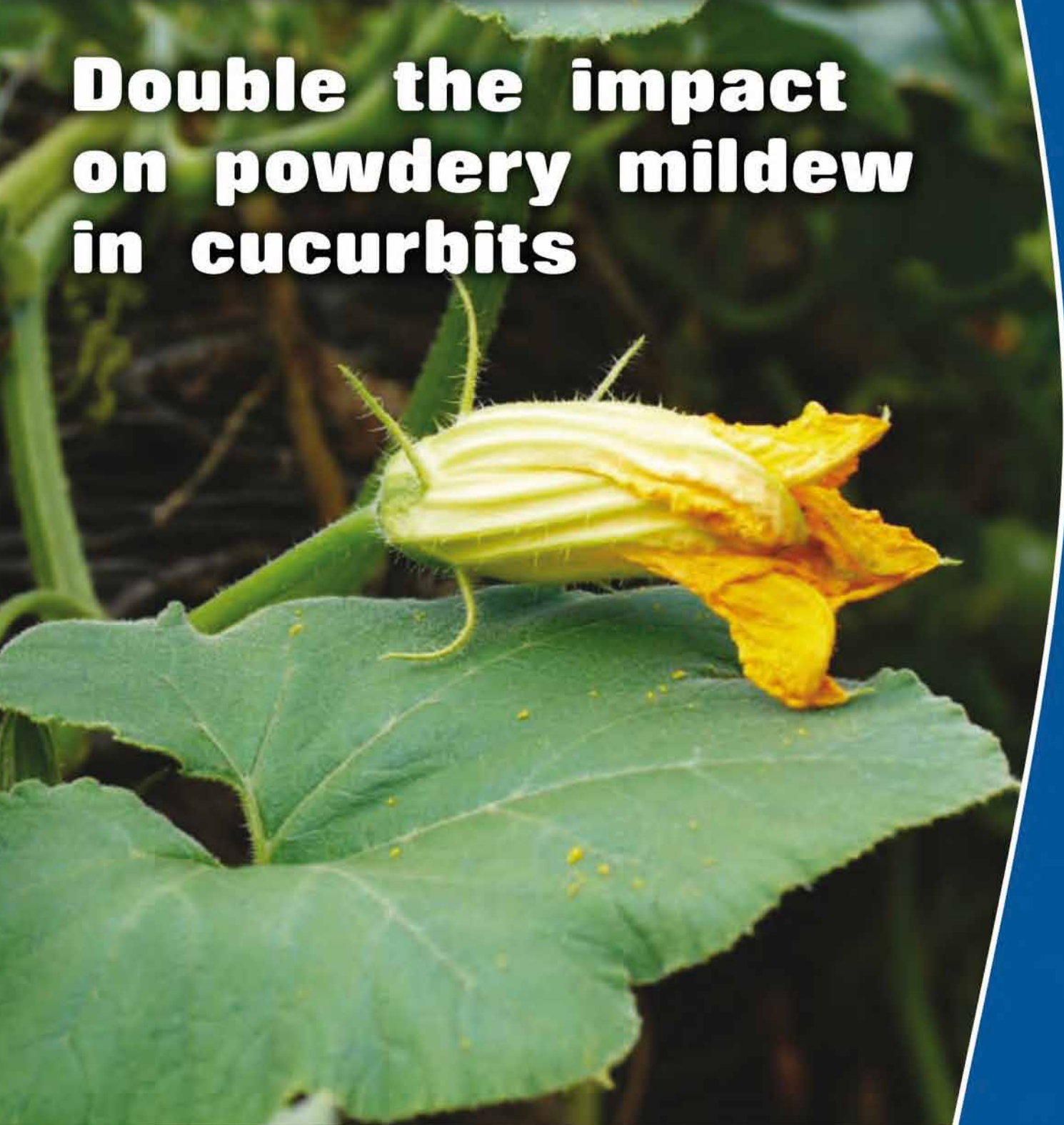
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All research and development projects have been funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and/or voluntary contributions from industry, and matched funds from the Australian Government. *Vegetables Australia* is produced by AUSVEG Ltd and is free for all National Vegetable Levy payers. For more information visit www.ausveg.com.au

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PO Box 2042, Camberwell West, Vic, 3124
ISSN 1834-2493



FRONT COVER:

Callum Hann with the
VISY team at the National
Convention

Photo by Phil Hargreaves

4 John Brent AUSVEG Chairman

I am delighted to report that the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence was a resounding success that exceeded all expectations.

The Convention saw close to 1,000 delegates converge on the Sebel-Citigate Hotel in the heart of Brisbane for the three-day event, which was the culmination of months of hard work from the team at AUSVEG, including our Board of Directors.

As the biggest event of its kind on the horticulture calendar, the Convention brought together members of all levels of the vegetable and potato industry supply chain from across Australia and provided an invaluable opportunity for networking.

During the three days, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet many delegates from around the country. It was the perfect platform to discuss the current challenges facing the horticulture industry and for members to share their concerns and experiences, with the aim of working together to find solutions.

The Convention showcased a

superb line-up of speakers that really raised its profile.

Keynote speaker Senator Barnaby Joyce, Leader of the Nationals in the Senate, delivered a thought-provoking address and conveyed a number of relevant messages to the industry, while delegates also heard from Senator The Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and The Hon. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, as well as a number of key industry figures and experts on a wide range of topics.

These included: Dr Maria Teresa Almanza, Product Development Manager Insecticides, Beneficials and Pollinators at Bayer CropScience; Dr Robert Mikkelsen, Senior Research Scientist—Soils and Land Management; Dr Michael Schaper, Deputy Chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and Greg Fraser, Executive Director and CEO of Plant Health Australia.

A lively debate also saw two experts tackle the topic of 'Water usage in the Murray-Darling

Basin', which raised a number of interesting points on an issue close to the hearts of many growers.

Delegates also gathered to see the latest products that are available on the Australian market at the Trade Show, which attracted some 70 exhibitors from all areas of the industry. Impressive farming and production equipment, state-of-the-art on-farm technologies and pioneering chemical and biological products were displayed, alongside the latest information on research and development projects and new governmental programs.

An exciting social program was enjoyed by all, with celebrity lunches, a breakfast trip to Brisbane Produce Markets, a country and western theme night and an afternoon of paintballing for young growers among some of the highlights.

The Convention culminated in the National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner, which was a fantastic evening that honoured some of the industry's most outstanding members.

Twelve awards were presented to growers and representatives of the supply chain and

research community alike. Each of the finalists should be incredibly proud of their achievements and contributions to the industry.

Finally, the success of this event would not have been possible without the backing of our leading partners and our loyal sponsors—and most importantly the growers. The Convention was testament to AUSVEG's continued support for the industry and its commitment to providing a voice for all of its members—and ultimately representing them in the most effective way possible.



John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG

Richard Mulcahy AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

It was great to see so many growers in a central location at the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention in Brisbane. The event not only brought together growers from all over Australia, but also united different generations within the industry.

More than 30 young growers from around the country attended the AUSVEG National Convention and enjoyed a special afternoon of paintballing, sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, as part of the event. It was an excellent opportunity for the next generation to meet key industry players and to share experiences with long-serving vegetable growers who have been in the business for many years.

While it was wonderful to see a good turnout of young blood, succession management within the vegetable industry still remains a key issue. The topic was addressed at the AUSVEG National Convention by Managing Director of

Peracto, Ian Macleod, who gave everyone plenty to think about during his speaker session.

The identified shortfall of young people coming into horticulture, whether it be in growing or agronomy roles, presents a very real challenge to the future of the industry. An ageing horticultural workforce, the well-documented challenges associated with the industry and a lack of encouragement for young people to study horticulture are some of the factors that contribute to the difficulties with succession.

It is essential that young growers continue to enter the industry, but it is also critical that we have future experts to fill the jobs beyond the field, including in the research area. With mechanisation being adopted by more farms, pioneering research and development strategies continually being established and new technologies to maximise yields and improve environmental sustainability

continuously being launched, it is crucial to the success and progression of the industry that the next generation of skilled professionals is found.

To that end, our Queensland Member Growcom has called for a concerted effort to be made to attract future growers, scientists and experts and to encourage uptake of formal industry qualifications in a recent report into the future of Australia's food security.

The vegetable industry is also fostering and encouraging a new generation of young leaders in the vegetable industry through the Growing Leaders initiative. The first session of 2011 took place during the AUSVEG National Convention. Meanwhile, a second edition of the Horticultural Careers Guide, a magazine aimed at promoting career pathways and tertiary courses on horticulture to senior school students, has also been launched. Details can be obtained through our WA Member vegetablesWA.

Initiatives such as these play an integral role in ensuring we not only reach potential industry employees, but also encourage our younger workforce to strengthen their skills and develop their knowledge further.

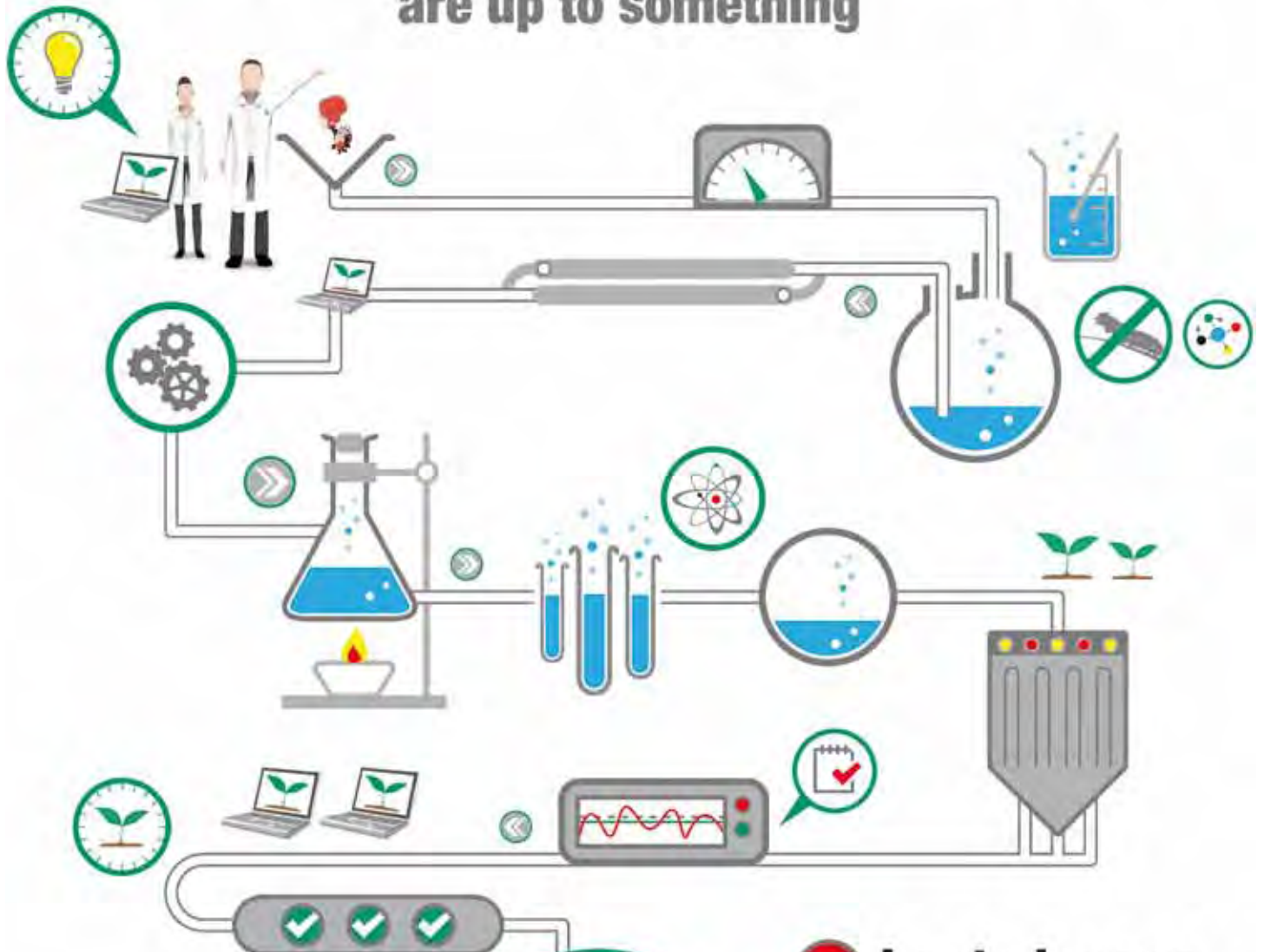
To hear first-hand from a budding vegetable grower, turn to *Vegetables Australia's* regular young grower Q&A feature on page 34.



Richard J Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG

GREAT NEWS FOR VEGETABLE GROWERS:

The brainy people at Dow AgroSciences
are up to something



- ✓ Lasts longer
- ✓ More pests
- ✓ More crops
- ✓ More power

Editorial

AUSVEG was delighted to see nearly 1,000 delegates attend the National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence in April.

After building on the foundations of the inaugural event last year, the 2011 National Convention exceeded all expectations with a sell-out Trade Show, Gala Dinner and record attendance.

The event brought growers together from across Australia and gave them the opportunity to meet with members of the supply chain and representatives from different areas of the industry to discuss challenges, opportunities and solutions.

This edition of *Vegetables Australia* brings you all the highlights of the Convention in Brisbane, as well as a full overview (page 8) and plenty of colourful pictures to give you a flavour of the event. We also have full coverage of the 2011 AUSVEG National Awards for

Excellence on page 16.

The program of high-profile speakers was one of the Convention's main features and AUSVEG was proud to welcome such an esteemed line-up.

One of the highlights was Senator Barnaby Joyce, Leader of the Nationals in the Senate, who delivered an impassioned keynote address focusing on the need to support the industry (page 10).

A number of international

experts also travelled to Brisbane to speak at the Convention, including Dr Maria Teresa Almanza, Product Development Manager Insecticides, Beneficials and Pollinators at Bayer CropScience, who delivered a presentation about the latest research and development of products to assist with IPM systems. Afterwards, she spoke to *Vegetables Australia* about the topic (page 15).

You can also read about Dr Rob Mikkelsen-Director of the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) for Western North America—who travelled from the US to share his plant nutrition knowledge during a series of speaker sessions sponsored by Incitec Pivot (page 46).

We also have an overview of the first Mechanisation Seminar, which took place in conjunction with the Convention (page 14).

The aim was to identify potential expenditure needs in R&D in mechanisation systems for the Australian vegetable industry.

Vegetables Australia travels to WA for the Grower Feature with Denise Ellement, who shares her experiences of being a women in the horticulture industry for more than 30 years (page 28), and we also talk to budding grower Ben Walker (page 34).

There is also our regular range of the latest R&D reports, projects and news from the vegetable industry.



Growers head to the Brisbane Produce Market Breakfast at the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention - pg 12



Young grower Ben Walker - pg 34



Strategies for sustainable beetroot - pg 24



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Convention celebrates

The 2011 AUSVEG National Convention and Awards for Excellence has triumphed, writes Lisa Higginson.

The 2011 National Convention has been hailed a resounding success after smashing last year's attendance across a packed three-day program. Close to 1,000 delegates gathered at the Sebel-Citigate Hotel in the heart of Brisbane's CBD from April 14-16 for the Convention—which is now the biggest event of its kind in Australia's horticulture industry.

After months of mounting anticipation, growers, and members of the supply chain assembled for the launch of the Convention at a Welcome Reception on Thursday, 14 April, sponsored by Syngenta and Elders.

AUSVEG Chairman John Brent welcomed delegates to the second annual National Convention, before cutting the ribbon and officially opening the Trade Show with former AFL star Robert "Dipper" DiPierdomenico.

Crowds poured through the doors to get a glimpse of the

showcase of 70 trade stands, which featured a host of state-of-the-art agri-technologies, the latest pest management products on the market and a range of R&D news and information.

Spanning across two function suites, the trade show provided plenty for people to peruse across the three days and offered a valuable platform for growers to meet members of the supply chain and suppliers and forge important links.

Thursday also saw around 25 young growers gather together for a fun-packed afternoon of paintballing, sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, during a special event designed to celebrate the industry's youngest members.

Friday

A number of delegates awoke bright and early on Friday, 15 April to attend a breakfast at Brisbane Produce Market, which was sponsored by the Central Markets Association of Australia (CMAA).

The breakfast involved a who's who of Australian state and federal politics and included talks from The Hon. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition; Campbell Newman, Leader-Designate for the Liberal National Party in Brisbane and Andrew Young, CEO of Brisbane Produce Market. Following the formalities, Tony Abbott was accompanied by Campbell Newman, The Hon. John Cobb MP, AUSVEG Chairman John Brent, AUSVEG Director John Said and AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy on a tour of the markets.

The Trade Show opened its doors for a second day, while the impressive program of speakers also kicked off at 9am with an address by AUSVEG Chairman John Brent. The much-anticipated keynote speaker, Senator Barnaby Joyce, Leader of the Nationals in the Senate, was welcomed to the stage, where he delivered a impassioned speech to a packed auditorium.

Dr Michael Schaper, Deputy Chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and Elders CEO Malcolm Jackman also took to the stage during the morning. It was standing room only for The Hon. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, who gave a thought-provoking speech that touched on a number of hot topics affecting horticulture.

The Incitec Pivot Plant Nutrition Sessions were well-received, with esteemed international and regional speakers discussing a range of R&D topics from nutrient benchmarking to global developments in horticultural nutrition.

In a special coup for the Convention, MasterChef finalist Callum Hann wowed audiences with his culinary wizardry during the Celebrity Chef Lunch Entertainment, sponsored by VISY. Using fresh produce supplied by south Queensland growers at Kalfresh, Callum cooked up a storm in the Trade Show and allowed onlookers to



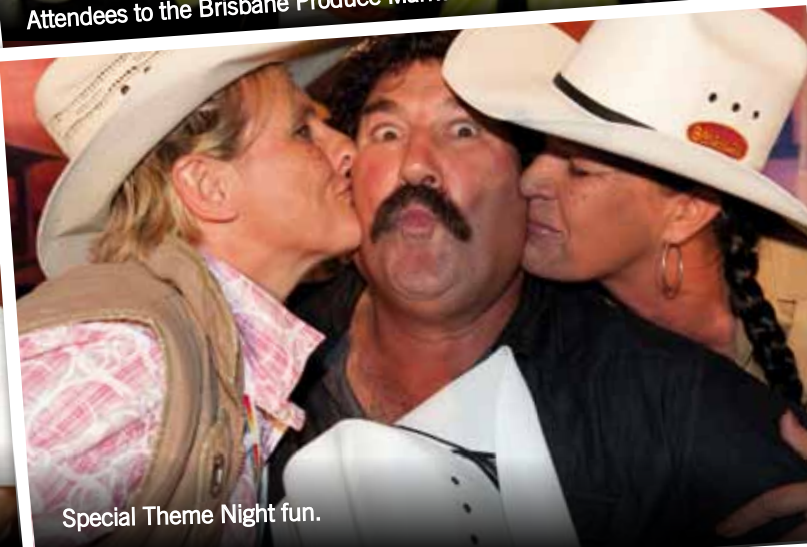
Attendees to the Women in Horticulture Breakfast.



Attendees to the Brisbane Produce Market Breakfast.



Laurie Wilson, Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan, Richard Mulcahy, and Dr Jennifer Marohasy at The Great Debate.



Special Theme Night fun.

staggering success

with close to 1,000 delegates descending on the event from all across Australia,

taste his dishes.

The Convention's exciting social program began on Friday evening with the Country and Western Special Theme Night, sponsored by DuPont, which took place at the Royal on the Park. Attendees got into the spirit by sporting cowboy party hats and enjoyed a meal and live music. Money was also raised for the 139 Club charity.

Saturday

Sunrise on Saturday, 16 April saw a host of delegates attend the al-fresco Women in Horticulture Breakfast, which was sponsored by Steritech and the Australian Government. The event recognised the pivotal roles that women play within the horticulture industry and, after enjoying a delicious buffet breakfast, delegates heard from a range of speakers, including Fiona Simpson MP and Senior Policy Officer for NSW Farmers Association Alison Anderson, as well as representatives from MADEC and the Pacific

Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme.

Along with the Trade Show, the program of speaker sessions also continued with a line-up that included Radiation Biologist Dr Peter Roberts,

CropScience.

Temperatures rose in the auditorium later that day as two experts went head-to-head on the topic of 'Water Usage in the Murray-Darling Basin' during

their expert views during the lively discussion, which was moderated by Laurie Wilson, President of the National Press Club.

Delegates then enjoyed a star-studded lunch during the Bayer CropScience Sporting Identities Event. The panel featured Brent Livermore, the Olympic hockey player who captained Australia to win gold in Athens in 2004; Australian Olympic swimmer Samantha Riley; former Australian netball captain Vicki Wilson and AFL Brownlow medalist Barry Round. The entertaining event saw Dipper conduct a light-hearted interview with each of the sporting stars, which had the audience laughing all the way through lunch.

Saturday evening saw the event that everyone had been waiting for—the AUSVEG 2011 National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner. More than 400 delegates dressed in their finery for a candlelit dinner, which was followed by the presentation of 12 prestigious awards. Minister

“Crowds poured through the doors to get a glimpse of the showcase of 70 trade stands, which featured a host of state-of-the-art agri-technologies, the latest pest management products on the market and a range of R&D news and information.”

Regional Director of Syngenta Asia Pacific Andrew Guthrie and Dr Maria Teresa Almanza, Product Development Manager Insecticides, Beneficials and Pollinators at Bayer

the Great Debate, sponsored by Boomaroo Nurseries.

Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan, of the Australian Conservation Fund, and Biologist Dr Jennifer Marohasy exchanged

continued over page ▶



The Hon. Tony Abbott delivers a thought-provoking speech.



AUSVEG Director Paul Bogdanich with Katina Trout of Incitec Pivot at the Trade Show.



National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner.



AUSVEG Director Geoff Moar asks a question at The Great Debate.

for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Senator The Hon. Joe Ludwig was the guest of honor and delivered an insightful address.

Meanwhile, Dipper introduced ministers, past winners and sponsors to present the accolades and there were a few surprises along the way that ensured an exceptional evening was had by all. For full coverage of the awards see page 16.

The 2011 Potato Summit

The inaugural Potato Summit took place at the Sebel-Citigate Hotel on Sunday, 17 April following the AUSVEG National Convention. Co-hosted by AUSVEG and Potatoes New Zealand and sponsored by McCain, the event provided a valuable opportunity for growers to discover cutting-edge industry research and hear from international experts in potato diseases and viruses.

Among the summit's esteemed speakers were Mark du Plessis, CEO of Potatoes South Africa, and Dr Robert Clayton, Director of the UK Potato Council, who gave an insight into the potato

industries in each country and the issues they faced.

Diseases such as Zebra Chip were also under the spotlight at the summit, with Business Manager of Potatoes New Zealand Ron Gall giving an update on how the country is dealing with the challenges it presents.

Leading scientific researchers in Phase Two of the Australian Potato Research Program (APRP2), Dr Ian Porter and Dr Kathy Ophel Keller, also presented their latest findings and outlined developments in controlling potato diseases in the potato industry.

Special thanks

AUSVEG would like to thank its leading strategic partners Elders, DuPont, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience, as well as the following sponsors: Dow AgroSciences, John Deere, Boomaroo Nurseries, VISY, Toolpak, Peracto, Kalfresh, Incitec Pivot, Steritech, Williamses, Terranova Seeds, Netafim, Hortus, Queensland Government, Transplant Systems, Landmark, McCain,



CMAA and the Australian Government.

Plans are already afoot for next year's National Convention, which promises to build on

the success of the 2011 event and raise the bar even higher to ensure it continues to benefit the Australian vegetable industry as a whole.



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“ We have got to make sure that we understand that the heritage and the legacy which is farming is there forever. ”

Finding strength in the *heritage of farming*

A fair deal for farmers, tougher labelling laws and the need to secure the future of growing for generations to come were some of the messages delivered by Senator Barnaby Joyce at the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention.

Opening his keynote speech, the Leader of the Nationals in the Senate said that it was the right and obligation of people in the vegetable industry to produce food and that everyone involved with that was doing a morally good thing.

Senator Joyce acknowledged the important part that Australia played in feeding the world and said for that to continue, the industry needed support in return.

“I’m sitting in front of a group of people who are responsible for producing about three and a half million tonnes of produce and for producing about \$3

billion in turnover,” he said.

“We need to start protecting people so they get a fair deal.”

“You need the flow to come back to the farm gate. There is a lot of work that needs to be done on farms and there are bank managers who need to be repaid.”

“So we need a time when we are getting a good return, so that in the longer term we’ve got a better chance of survival.”

Addressing the issue of food labelling, Senator Joyce said labels should give consumers a clear identification of whether the food was produced in Australia or not, so they could

choose to support farmers.

He said: “What we need is a form of labelling that has to be simple, has to be standard, has to be compulsory and has to be proportional to tell you what proportion of it is Australian.”

Looking to the future, Senator Joyce discussed the potential effects of a carbon tax and expressed the importance of encouraging young people into the industry.

“We have to work as a group to try and make sure we re-invest in regional Australia,” he said.

“We’ve got to make sure we maintain our moral obligation

to feed the world and ourselves. We have got to make sure that we make it an opportunity in life for young people who want to go and work on the farm.”

“We have got to make sure that we understand that the heritage and the legacy which is farming is there forever. That it is a continuum, that it has been the spine of Australia since it was formed and it will be there in the future because it’s just what we are.”

“And we should be making sure that everything we do in policy and structure is part of re-enforcing that.”

Brisbane Produce Markets Breakfast, sponsored by CMAA



The 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence.



Speakers of the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention



Celebrity Chef Lunch, sponsored by VISY and Kalfresh



Special theme night, sponsored by DuPont



1. [L to R] AUSVEG Chairman John Brent, The Hon. Tony Abbott, The Hon. John Cobb and Campbell Newman 2. The Hon. John Cobb and AUSVEG Peter Roberts 9. The Hon. Senator Joe Ludwig 10. Dr Maria Teresa Almanza 11. Calum Hann and Dipper 12. Fiona Simpson MP 13. Dr Jennifer Brent Livermore and Richard Dickman.



Trade Show Opening, sponsored by Elders and Syngenta



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



12.

Women in Horticulture Breakfast, sponsored by Steritech and The Australian Government



The Great Debate, sponsored by Boomaroo Nurseries

13.



14.



Sporting Identities Event, sponsored by Bayer CropScience

15.

Chairman John Brent. 3. The Hon. Tony Abbott 4. Dr Ian Porter 5. Prof Richard Eckard 6. Dr Warwick Dougherty 7. Richard Macchiesi 8. Dr Marohasy and Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan 14. Alison Anderson 15. [L to R] AUSVEG Chairman John Brent, Barry Round, Sam Riley, Dipper, Vicki Wilson,

Moving forward with mechanisation



Mechanisation was the focus of a gathering of minds at a special seminar held in conjunction with the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, writes Lisa Higginson.

The inaugural Mechanisation Seminar on 13 April brought together industry specialists from both research and commercial fields, as well as prominent growers from across Australia, for an in-depth focus on the contemporary topic.

The objective of the event, which saw 46 people attend, was to identify potential expenditure needs in R&D in mechanisation systems for the Australian vegetable industry during the next 10 years. It was also designed to assist the Vegetable IAC and its subgroups in making optimal investment decisions to benefit growers in the future.

The seminar was led by Jeff Tullberg, a consultant with Controlled Traffic Farming Solutions (CTFS), and consultant Tony Russell, of Russell AGvice.

The main focus of the event was field mechanisation and the topic was broken down into four categories that were each

addressed by a speaker. These were:

- Precise Technology—The Opportunities: John McPhee of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR).
- Precise Technology—The Impact: Dr Don Yule of Controlled Traffic Farming Solutions (CTFS) and Robert Hinrichsen of Kalfresh.
- Site-Specific Agriculture: Dr Brett Whelan of the Australian Centre of Precision Agriculture (ACPA) and Troy Jensen of The National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA).
- Product Handling, People and Automation: Clyde Campbell of Machinery Automation and Robotics (MARS) and Ian Willert of Boomaroo Nurseries.

The seminar also heard supplier views from Kevin Platz of John Deere and Mark Bell of Transplant Systems.

Each speaker offered an informative insight into the topic and the seminar paved the

way for creating a combined approach to increase the adoption of mechanisation in the vegetable industry.

A key point highlighted at the event was that the need for robotics and automation was greatest at the point of harvest to enhance labour productivity in the future.

Following the program of speakers, growers had their chance to put forward suggestions of how the industry could move forward in this area in terms of R&D. It was suggested that a scoping study be carried out as an initial investigation into the way crops are harvested today and what types of automation could be applied to improve on them. Tomatoes, cucumbers and capsicums were outlined as three of the industry's prominent crops that could be used as a scoping target.

The seminar also highlighted the crucial need for all R&D in mechanisation to be made

easily available to growers to allow them to make informed decisions on what systems could be applied to their farm and at what cost.

An example of such R&D information highlighted at the seminar was the scoping study to review Mechanisation, Automation, Robotics and Remote Sensing (MARRS) in Australian horticulture. The object of the project, which was led by Russel Rankin of Food Innovation Partners with support from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), was to review the opportunities and likely impediments for the development and implementation of MARRS technologies into the horticulture industry.

The seminar proved successful for both growers and industry specialists, who left with ideas and inspiration on how to advance R&D in mechanisation to benefit vegetable production in the future.



A copy of the scoping study to review Mechanisation, Automation, Robotics and Remote Sensing (MARRS) in Australian horticulture can be obtained from HAL at www.horticulture.com.au. Project number HG09044.



International expert sheds light on IPM

Growers grasped the opportunity to discover the latest advances in R&D during the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, writes Lisa Higginson.

Experts from across the industry updated audiences at the convention on the latest research that has been conducted in a range of areas, with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) being a relevant topic that attracted attention.

Offering an insightful presentation on the benefits and developments of IPM was Dr Maria Teresa Almanza—Product Development Manager Insecticides, Beneficials and Pollinators at Bayer CropScience—who was among a plethora of professionals invited to speak at the convention.

Dr Almanza travelled from Germany, where she is based with Bayer CropScience, to attend the Convention as part of a short tour of Australia that also saw her visit several growers.

With more than 20 years experience in research and development, Dr Almanza leads the development of IPM systems in conjunction with the development of new products at the global company.

During her presentation, Dr Almanza outlined the main aspects of sustainable IPM systems and emphasised the importance of interaction

between chemical control and biological control to allow beneficial species to survive.

She discussed a series of key points, highlighting that IPM was a dynamic system and needed continuous adjustments; that secondary pests were increasing; that there was a continual need for new beneficial and resistant crop varieties; that effective IPM-compatible insecticides

“It is important to understand that IPM is about using all available practices that make the integrated management of pests possible.”

were a prerequisite for efficient, sustainable IPM systems and that adequate technical assistance remained a key topic in the relationship between growers and suppliers.

Dr Almanza explained that Bayer CropScience was committed to supporting sustainable IPM programs and drew attention to two particular

soft products, Movento and Belt, that had been specifically developed by the company to have little or no effect on beneficial species.

Speaking after her presentation, Dr Almanza said: “I wanted to show that beneficials act in a very particular way and how we at Bayer CropScience go about developing compounds that are selective. We do internal trials

but we also have a strategic partnership with providers of biological control beneficials.”

Dr Almanza explained that the company also conducted very particular trials that were exposed to local growing conditions around Australia in a bid to provide information that was both helpful to the grower and to Bayer CropScience when

it came to integrating products into the system.

As part of her presentation, Dr Almanza gave examples of how growers have used IPM systems to combat pests in other parts of the world. These included the South Tyrol orchards in Italy, where 9,000 growers occupy 18,000 hectares of land, and in southern Spain, where the adoption of IPM has assisted sweet pepper growers. Dr Almanza explained that Australian growers could also benefit from adopting an area-based approach to IPM.

Dr Almanza summarised that the integration of selective crop protection products and beneficials was crucial for the development of sustainable IPM systems and that successful integration depended on a detailed understanding of beneficial, pest and crop biology, and the selectivity of crop protection products.

Following the presentation, Dr Almanza said: “It is important to understand that IPM is about using all available practices that make the integrated management of pests possible and that using selective insecticides can make it a lot easier to manage.”

AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence

The AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence were celebrated with a glittering gala dinner that marked the end of the 2011 National Convention on April 16 and honoured some of the industry's most outstanding members. Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico hosted the highly-anticipated evening which saw 12 worthy winners receive an AUSVEG accolade and Senator The Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, present as guest speaker.

Lifetime Achievement Award

2011 winner – Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene

Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene has more than 30 years' experience in the horticulture industry, holding many prestigious positions throughout his career. Beginning as a tutor in plant ecology at the University of Melbourne, Dr Clayton-Greene went on to lecture in plant physiology and worked as a research scientist, before joining Harvest Moon in Tasmania, he is currently the General Manager of Operations.

He has held past positions as president of IPMS Australia and ARAC Tasmania among others, and has had around 25 refereed scientific publications and written several book chapters on horticulture and related topics.



Chairman's Award

2011 winner – Mr Jeff McSpedden

Mr Jeff McSpedden is a veteran of the vegetable industry, with more than 35 years experience behind him. Located south of Bathurst, he is the owner-operator of two vegetable farms growing brassica vegetables and sweet corn for both fresh and processed markets. He also leases a family farm, producing wool, meat and cropping.

Mr McSpedden is Chair of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) and his impressive resume boasts past positions as Director on the Board of AUSVEG, Vice Chairman of AUSVEG, Board Director of Cowra Export Packers Group and Captain over local Bushfire Brigades.



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Grower of the Year Award

Finalists

- Mr Greg Lerch
Queensland
- Mr Sam Calameri
Western Australia
- Mr Robert Cirillo
South Australia
- Mr Max Baker
Tasmania
- Bogdanich Farms
Western Australia



2011 winner Mr Sam Calameri, Baldivis, WA

Sponsored by **Dow AgroSciences**
Science for growth

Young Grower of the Year Award

Finalists

- Mr Angelo Lamattina
Victoria
- Mr Michael Rieck
Queensland
- Mr Andrew Bulmer
Victoria
- Ms Andrea Hawkes
Victoria
- Mr Leigh Elphinstone
Tasmania
- Mr Steven Musolino
South Australia
- Mr Phillip Cochrane
Victoria
- Mr Damian Rigali
Western Australia



2011 winner Mr Andrew Bulmer, Lindenow, VIC

Sponsored by **Steritech**

Women in Horticulture Award

Finalists

- Ms Deborah Corrigan
Victoria
- Dr Melina Parker
Tasmania
- Ms Yvonne Fahl
Western Australia
- Ms Denise Kreymborg
Queensland
- Ms Stacey Mamnone
Victoria
- Ms Margie Milgate
Queensland
- Ms Kim Evans
Victoria
- Ms Sally Brent
Queensland



2011 winner Ms Deborah Corrigan, Clyde, VIC

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look to us

Rising Star of the Year Award

Finalists

- Mr Tom Hunt
Queensland
- Ms Denise Kreymborg
Queensland
- Mr Michael Vorassi
Victoria
- Ms Sally Brent
Queensland



2011 winner Mr Tom Hunt, Boonah, QLD

Sponsored by  Bayer CropScience

Researcher of the Year Award

Finalists

- Dr Ian Porter
Victoria
- Dr David Beardsell
Victoria
- Mr Russel McCrystal
Queensland
- Mr Denis Persley
Queensland
- Dr Calum Wilson
Tasmania
- Mr Rohan Prince
Western Australia
- Dr Hoong Pung
Tasmania



2011 winner Mr Denis Persley, Dutton Park, QLD

Sponsored by 

Productivity Partner Award

Finalists

- Mr Cameron Hussey
Victoria
- Carnarvon Growers Association
Western Australia
- Mr Phillip Dobson
Tasmania
- Peracto
Tasmania



2011 winner Peracto, Devonport, TAS

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Industry Recognition Award

Finalists

- Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene
Tasmania
- Mr David Carter
New South Wales
- Mr Wayne Stockton
Victoria
- Mr Max McKenna
Tasmania
- Mr Bert Russell
Western Australia
- Ms Margie Milgate
Queensland



2011 winner Mr Max McKenna, Gawler, TAS

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Innovative Marketing Award

Finalists

- Mr Rick Butler
Victoria
- Mitolo Group
South Australia
- Western Potatoes
Western Australia
- Mr Michael Vorassi
Victoria
- Mr Phillip Lamattina
Victoria



2011 winner Mitolo Group, Virginia, SA



Sponsored by

Industry Impact Award

Finalists

- Mr David Carter
New South Wales
- Mr Phillip Dobson
Victoria
- Mr Frank Tedesco
Western Australia
- Mr Sean and Mrs Lorelle
McShane
Queensland
- Mr Rohan Prince
Western Australia



2011 winner Mr Rohan Prince, Bentley, WA

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GROW MORE WITH LESS

Environmental Award

Finalists

- Mr Jason Huggins
Queensland
- Mr Rodney Emerick
Queensland
- Mr Frank Ruffo
Victoria
- Mr Jeff McSpedden
New South Wales
- Mr Sean and Mrs Lorelle
McShane
Queensland
- Mr Dennis Moon
Victoria
- Mrs Maureen Dobra
Western Australia
- Mr Steven Newman
South Australia



2011 winner Mr Rodney Emerick, Bowen, QLD

Getting the message growers encouraged

AUSVEG has been charged with the important task of communicating outputs platform to growers. A central part of that task has been the generation of developed a new search engine that allows growers to access research and

AUSVEG has been active in the media promoting findings from the *Veginsights* reports and other outputs, which have been channelled through the industry's 'Knowledge Management' program since September 2009.

The Knowledge Management system is a central online database, or information store, where research and development (R&D) reports and findings dating back to the early 2000s are kept for easy searchability. An archive of all the levy-funded research and development that has been funded by industry, the search engine is a useful index that if harnessed correctly can provide growers with access to information more quickly and effectively than in the past.

AUSVEG's role is to provide communications support to the program in the external media and through trade publications such as *Vegetables Australia* magazine.

AUSVEG Manager-VIDP Communications, Andrew White, said the coverage AUSVEG had achieved so far had been wide-ranging.

"We purposefully targeted a range of different media channels to try and promote the outputs of the program to a broad audience and we found

coverage has ranged from ABC Radio interviews aired around Australia through to articles published in Good Fruit and Vegetables magazine, the Weekly Times and major metropolitan newspapers such as the Herald Sun, Courier Mail and Daily Telegraph.

"We are confident that this

of media releases which touched on the concept of MasterChef as a food marketing phenomenon and its affect on purchasing habits, which had been explored in the *Veginsights* reports. The response from the media was strong, so hopefully it translated into more growers being aware of the kinds of things that are discussed in the reports and the statistics that are available as part of the levy."

Mr White encouraged growers to log on and access the reports online from www.ausveg.com.au. The latest in the *Veginsights* series to be published is the quarterly report for the fourth quarter of 2010.

"As an example of the information contained in the reports, the December 2010 quarterly report contained information on the average household expenditure on fruit and vegetables," Mr White said.

"The report revealed that the average household weekly expenditure on fresh fruit and vegetables was \$28.50 per household, with household expenditure driven by a number of factors, including the number

“ Part of the strategy has been to come up with novel ideas to promote outputs of the program to growers that might not necessarily be internet savvy. ”

that many of the findings from the *Veginsights* market reports had really good traction with the media," he said.

With over 400 media hits recorded since July last year, it has been a busy time for AUSVEG. The extensive

awareness will translate to a higher uptake of the website and of the market report, which includes information to inform growers on aspects including market size, trends, household purchasing behaviours and consumption habits," Mr White said.

"For example, we did a series

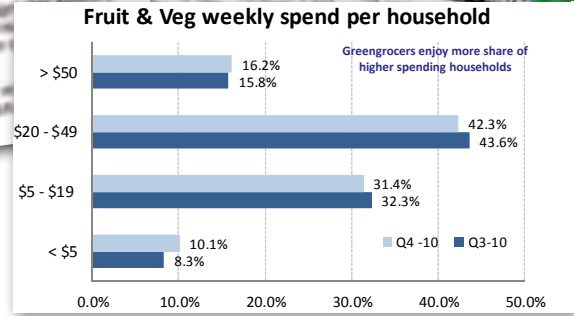


out... to get online

More of us put stock in vegies

Chaps choose chilli with their carrots

Favourite vegies report



of the Vegetable Industry Development Program's 'Knowledge Management' extensive media coverage to raise awareness of the program, which has development findings dating back to the early 2000s.

of people in the household, the level of income and the number of meals eaten away from home."

The report also revealed that consumers were becoming increasingly time precious, Mr White explained, with an increase in the proportion of shoppers reporting that they were usually too busy to prepare meals at home.

"While at present 37 per cent felt they were too busy to prepare meals at home, only 7 per cent felt this way at the same time last year," Mr White said.

New format

According to AUSVEG, it's critical that the outputs of industry development are communicated through different channels.

"Part of the strategy has been to come up with novel ideas to promote outputs of the program to growers that might not necessarily be internet savvy," Mr White said.

"It's important that we publicise the fact that these kinds of materials are available online and encourage as many growers as possible to access them, or learn how to get access to them."

While the key component of the 'on the ground' work in this regard was now being undertaken by the state vegetable grower bodies through a separate program, Mr White said that AUSVEG would trial a hard-copy format of *Veginsights* in the July/August edition of the bi-monthly *Vegetables Australia* magazine.

The idea is that the new format will provide readers with a better understanding of the types of informative market resources that are being produced with levy dollars and subsequently made available to growers for free, either online or through email.

"The next edition of the magazine will see the inclusion of a category profile of a particular vegetable type. Growers will get a glimpse of the kind of materials that they can have access to for free, simply by subscribing online to the AUSVEG website or mailing list," Mr White said.

"It's not a hard thing to join up to either. While we understand that life on the farm is extremely chaotic, at the same time we are just as happy if a grower wants to call us up on the phone and we'll register them there and then."

Communication

Vegetable growers or industry representatives who would like to register for access to the *Veginsights* reports or the R&D search engine, should simply visit www.ausveg.com.au and click on 'Register Here'.

Mr White stressed that growers could also call AUSVEG on (03) 9822 0388 for assistance in registering.

AUSVEG would continue to push hard for coverage in all media forms, Mr White said, so that the awareness of the program was not only communicated through the trade/rural media, but across multiple platforms.

"Whether it's including a brochure on apprenticeships that assists with people development like we did last month, doing interviews on ABC Radio around Australia, or tailoring a market report to fit the parameters of a magazine, we will do whatever we can to assist in getting this information out there."

The Communications Support to Knowledge Management program is a sub-program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program and is funded through the National Vegetable Levy

with matching funds from the Australian Government.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- AUSVEG is providing communications support to the Knowledge Management program by promoting the new AUSVEG website and various grower resources that are made available electronically, such as the *Veginsights* market reports, which can be accessed from www.ausveg.com.au.
- AUSVEG has generated substantial media coverage for the program by appearing in the press and on radio, promoting key outputs of the program.
- The secure area of the website now includes new content that vegetable growers can access, including market reports, information on people development, industry statistics, and a search engine which indexes all the R&D completed since the early 2000s.

i For more information:
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 Manager VIDP Communications
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 Project Number: VG09161

Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States Covered
PER8931	Propachlor / Silverbeet & Spinach / Broadleaf and Grass weeds	21-Apr-11	30-Mar-15	All States

These permits have had their additional data requirements changed.

Full details of all permits are available on the APVMA website: www.apvma.gov.au/permits

Strategies for sustainable beetroot

An innovative best practice manual will help beetroot farmers in Queensland's Lockyer Valley standardise practices to improve yields, boost quality and ultimately create a more sustainable industry, writes Karen Shaw.

Around 25,000 tonnes, or more than 80 per cent, of Australia's domestically-grown beetroot crop is processed through Golden Circle as sliced and baby grade beetroot. This beetroot is produced by nine farmers in the Lockyer Valley, about 100km west of Brisbane.

However, growers have been plagued over many years by fluctuating yields, reduced beet quality and rising costs.

The best practice manual is the result of a four-year research project, which aimed to investigate how to improve the industry and provide better on-farm returns. The study was funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), Golden Circle Limited and the growers.

Project principal researcher Tim Wolens said the manual had been well-received by farmers.

"Sharing information and knowledge is a vital step to improving industry standards," he said.

The initial stage of the

project involved interviewing each grower about their on-farm practices, including ground preparation, irrigation, fertilisation, planting regimes and pest and disease management. This information was compiled and formed the basis of the manual.

“ I'm confident that having a manual, which gives advice on best practice, will ensure this valuable Australian industry can continue to produce a high quality product efficiently and sustainably into the future. ”

Mr Wolens said he was surprised at the variation in techniques used across the nine broadacre farms.

"Some farmers had better irrigation techniques, others better harvesting programs," he said.

"We found that every grower was doing something different, but that no-one was getting it 100 per cent right."

"We collated the data from our days of interviewing and from this extracted the guidelines to start benchmarking best practice."

One area for improvement was land preparation.

"We found that many farmers were not using some cultivation equipment correctly, which caused drainage problems and led to heightened disease pressure," Mr Wollens said.

"We found that many farmers over-irrigated crops, which also heightened disease outbreaks," he said.

"Just being aware of simple things like understanding when the plants need water can help improve overall yield."

"In addition to trialling a range of varieties, we also looked at planting densities and geometries. These are a key consideration in yield and bulb shape when planting a polygerm seed, where more than one shoot emerges per seed. In this case, if the bulbs develop too closely and grow against each other, the results can be misshapen beets, which are rejected. Results of field trials showed that 20inch (50.8cm) row spacing had higher yields and fewer rejects."

Mr Wolens added: "We found that care needed to be taken to ensure beetroot varieties were planted and harvested at the right time for optimum results."

"Most of the seed varieties grown in Australia are sourced





from Europe, and are selected because they suit the local conditions. But we are always reviewing what's new on the market."

Another key finding of the report was evaluating fertiliser application rates.

"We first looked at what fertilisers were being used, how often and when they were applied during the plant's lifecycle," Mr Wolens explained.

"We found it was pointless applying nitrogen eight weeks before harvest—as many farmers were doing—but that it was really important to add phosphorus and potassium throughout bulbing."

Best crop harvesting practices were also investigated. Already

in operation is what is called a single harvesting group—where farmers share the costs of owning a harvester and use the machinery in turns—which seems to work well.

In addition, some growers clean and grade in the paddock before sending the beets to the factory.

"We found that removing mud and dirt on-farm was a better practice and meant fewer rejections on the factory floor, so this is something more growers might investigate in future," Mr Wolens said.

A positive outcome of the study was finding that most farmers were doing a fairly good job at managing pest and disease issues.

"The biggest disease in beetroot crops is rhizoctonia and it is difficult to best manage that," Mr Wolens said.

"But we did find a fallow wheat crop in the off-season—between December and May—reported slightly improved disease management the following season."

"This is the first full season growers will have the best practice manual for guidance. I'm really looking forward to seeing the results."

"I'm confident that having a manual, which gives advice on best practice, will ensure this valuable Australian industry can continue to produce a high quality product efficiently and sustainably into the future."

THE BOTTOM LINE

- An innovative best practice manual for Lockyer Valley beetroot farmers should help improve industry productivity and future sustainability.
- The manual is the culmination of a four-year study, which includes guidelines for key areas ranging from fertilisation and irrigation to pest and disease management and harvesting practices.

i For more information:
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 Golden Circle Limited
 Email: <Tim.Wolens@au.hjheinz.com>
 Project Number: VG05083

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Focus on food

With the world's population expected to top nine billion by 2050, global concern over the food supply has highlighted the importance of Australia's horticulture industry in securing our food for how they can be overcome.

Not having reliable access to sufficient food supplies is a situation far from the minds of people living in Australia, where 98 per cent of fresh produce consumed is locally grown. But with pressure on the world to double its food production in the next 40 years, Australia is not immune from the threat of food security—which is defined under one definition as the reliable access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and affordable food.

As part of the national conversation taking place around the development of the federal government's National Food Plan, peak horticulture organisation Growcom has launched a major report titled *Food security issues for the Australian horticulture industry*, funded by Horticulture Australia

Limited (HAL), as part of the across industry program.

The report, led by Growcom's Troy Reeves, focused on the security of Australian domestic production and supply of fruit and vegetables and aimed to recommend actions that the Australian horticulture industry could implement in a bid to address food security and identify research and development priorities.

Data regarding food production, supply, sources and demand in Australia was reviewed by researchers, as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats arising from current trends of supply, demand and consumption.

Findings from the report

revealed that Australia was not as food secure as suggested by simplistic explanations of the relevant data.

Growcom Chief Executive Officer Alex Livingstone said that the general public was largely unaware that up to 34 per cent of fruit and 19 per cent of vegetables consumed in Australia were imported.

"In dollar terms, Australia imports a greater value of processed fruit and vegetables than we export and the gap has been steadily widening in the past decade," said Mr Livingstone.

"While we still export more fresh or chilled vegetables, fruit and nuts than we import,

the gap has been significantly narrowing in the past decade."

Mr Livingstone said that although successive governments had proclaimed the success of Australian agricultural exports as a sign there were no threats to food security, the figures used to support their arguments were biased by a small number of heavily export-focused industries such as meats and grains.

"Food security should not be measured based solely on how much production is exported," he added.

"There is also a need to look at how much of the food we eat is imported and consider whether in future, imported products will continue to be cheap or even



for the future

future of food security is mounting, writes Lisa Higginson. A recently-published report by food supply, the challenges the industry will face in doing so and outlined recommendations

available in the face of forecast burgeoning world populations.”

Information for the report was also gathered through a survey of Australian horticulture and food industry stakeholders, which was distributed to representatives directly involved in the horticulture supply chain and supporting industries—including growers, R&D, retail, processing, policy and distribution.

Findings revealed that the most universal response from non-government sources was the need for a dramatic increase in investment for R&D from the current level of three per cent of the gross value of agricultural production.

Mr Livingstone said: “The challenge to feed more people with the same or less land and water will require an increase in research and development funding from both private and public sources to at least 1970s levels of five per cent of

the gross value of agricultural production.”

The report recommended that the increased R&D program needed to be aimed at asking what food could be grown in Australia, where it could be grown and where productivity could be improved. It also needed to be proactive in recruiting and skilling the industry. This was reiterated in the report’s recommendation to increase incentives from the government and private sector to encourage more young people to achieve industry qualifications.

Most groups surveyed for the report, Mr Livingstone explained, felt that current government policy settings were inadequate and called for an integrated approach to food security within a Food Security Agency. This would form part of the federal agriculture portfolio to identify and reduce regulatory costs and foster a more conducive economic environment that promised research and development and innovation.

A decrease in land availability due to degradation and urbanisation was highlighted as one of the key factors contributing to the threat to long-term food security, while water usage was also deemed a critical factor affecting future food production.

Researchers identified a clear need to balance production requirements, environmental flows and to maintain healthy aquifers, as well as to secure new water sources. Identifying and protecting strategic cropping land was also suggested.

Mr Livingstone said: “A nationally coordinated food industry strategy is needed, which includes sustainability regarding water, waste, energy and carbon; a focus on the protection of prime horticultural lands, particularly arable lands close to urban centres of population; key investment in research and development; innovation and labour force development and training and, on the supply chain side, a need for action on retailer domination, predatory behaviour and cost competitiveness.”

The report also recommended the establishment of a tropical research program for Australia to include investigations of new

varieties and indigenous foods, as well as tropical foods, where there could be opportunity for horticulture to expand its market both domestically and internationally.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Growcom has produced a report into food security issues for the Australian horticulture industry, as part of the national conversation taking place around the development of the National Food Plan.
- In light of predictions that the world’s population is to top nine billion by 2050, Growcom researchers explored possible future scenarios of food security in Australia and assessed the threats and opportunities they posed.
- The report’s major recommendations were for a central Food Security Agency to be set up by the Australian Government, an increase to R&D funding to five per cent of the gross value of agricultural production and the development of a nationally coordinated food industry strategy.



For more information:
Alex Livingstone
Chief Executive Officer
Growcom
Phone: (03) 3620 3844
Project number: AH09009



“ The challenge to feed more people with the same or less land and water will require an increase in research and development funding from both private and public sources to at least 1970s levels of five per cent of the gross value of agricultural production. ”

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is smiling and leaning on a wooden railing. She is standing in a field of green crops. In the background, there are large irrigation systems with water spraying upwards, and a line of trees under a bright sky.

Growing *with change*

It was 34 years ago that Denise Ellement first rolled up her sleeves and started to sow the seeds for a future in horticulture, writes Lisa Higginson. Looking back over the past three decades, the Western Australian grower and Vegetable IAC member speaks to *Vegetables Australia* about embracing changes, overcoming challenges and what the future holds for the family business.



Gary, Ben and Denise Ellement.



The dance of changing traffic lights is a sign of shifting times for Denise Ellement. Where once the expanse of wild bushland provided the view from her veranda in Hammond Park, Western Australia, the landscape now illustrates the sprawl of suburbia.

This transformation from bush to building is just one of the many changes that Denise has seen during the 34 years she has been running Ellement Produce with her husband Gary at their 15-hectare farm.

When the couple first moved to the property to begin their future as growers it was not wired with electricity, such was its remoteness, but that didn't deter the enthusiasm of the Ellements.

"When we started it was just Gary and I," said Denise.

"That was the nature of growing back in those days, it was very much a family thing. Now my sons Ben, 34, and David, 37, all work in the business and my daughter Jodie also did her bit on the farm while growing up."

"Gary had a background of producing vegetables. His father grew vegetables and he also used to transport vegetables to the metropolitan markets, so his family have a long association with the industry."

Throughout the first 14 years of business, Denise and Gary grew a variety of different vegetables, including carrots, broccoli and spring onions, before deciding to focus their care and attention solely on leeks.

"When we first started

growing, people didn't just grow one crop, so over the years we have grown it all," said Denise.

"Then about 20 years ago we decided just to concentrate on leeks, as it is a very labour-intensive crop. Not many people in WA grow leeks for that reason, but we generally have a good yield."

What is still regarded as a labour-intensive crop today was even more so some 20 years ago, according to Denise.

“ I find hopping on a tractor an antidote to what I do as a psychologist. Every week I get on my tractor and go up and down each of the beds, create the work sheet and still do all the programming for the leeks. ”

"Basically we did everything by hand," she recalled.

"Cutting off the tops, cutting off the bottoms, trimming the leaves and packing them; we did everything manually and back then it was just me, my husband and one worker."

It wasn't long before Gary started to think about how he could make the intense process easier and began to develop machinery to use on the farm.

"My husband has very good mechanical knowledge and, over time, he gradually created

machinery to make it easier for us," explained Denise.

"For example, we bought a harvester 18 years ago from Holland, but it wouldn't work on

our farm. Gary spent a few years refining it and developing it to do what we needed it to do."

"Some of the machinery we use has been developed by my husband and by my son Ben. This has allowed us to increase output and numbers. The crop is still labour-intensive, but it's a lot easier and not so hands-on now."

Embracing all the challenges that arise during three decades of growing has been an important aspect of Ellement Produce's longevity.

Hot winds blowing in from the desert, prolonged dry spells and beds of incredibly sandy soil that require careful management of water are just some of the testing conditions that the farm has to face.

Denise said that, as well as finding ways to overcome these factors and the common difficulties faced by growers across Australia, being open-minded to change and moving with the times had also been key to the business' approach.

"Over the years the government agencies have become more active in monitoring processes, so we have had to become more aware of the impact our growing practices have on the environment," said Denise.

"We have had to become more mindful of what we are doing and to make adjustments to our ways of thinking and operating."

"Because we are price-takers, we have also had to improve production and reduce our costs, which is difficult when things like electricity and labour costs are increasing."

"Most growers get better at production and finding ways of maximising profit. If they don't they don't survive."

Being a woman in the horticulture industry presented a separate challenge for

“ When we first started growing, people didn't just grow one crop, so over the years we have grown it all. ”



Denise when she first started growing in the late 1970s, and embarking on a career in what was a typically male-orientated industry turned out to be a tough transition.

"I had a very hands-on role when I first started," she explained.

"I did all the spraying, but I began to notice that suppliers would only talk directly to Gary and would never talk to me. They used to ask him the questions, he would then ask me and then I would tell them the answer."

"I recognised that despite our partnership it was always going to be my husband's business. That was the nature of the industry at the time and that prompted me to do something to develop my own identity and gain recognition for my efforts."

At 35-years-old, Denise began studying for a degree in psychology at university. She juggled studies, three children and working part-time on the farm for six years, before finally qualifying as a clinical psychologist.

Denise then began her own private practice, which she continues to run three days-a-

week, and found that her two different careers provided a good juxtaposition in her life.

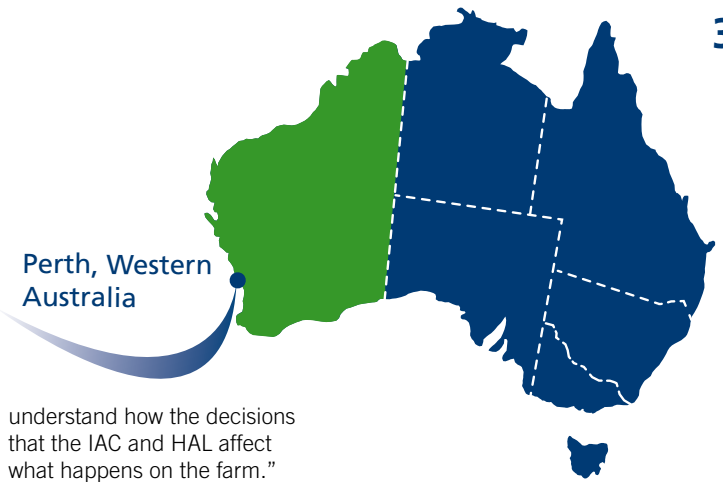
"In my work as a psychologist tangible outcomes are often difficult to measure, where as producing vegetables results in discernible and quantifiable outcomes."

"I find hopping on a tractor an antidote to what I do as a psychologist. Every week I get on my tractor and go up and down each of the beds, create the work sheet and still do all the programming for the leeks. I have continued to have a hands-on approach to the farm."

Denise's experience in the industry has enabled her to become a valuable member of the Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (IAC), to which she was appointed as a member 12 months ago. The committee is pivotal in the process of deciding how levy payers' money is best invested.

"I am gaining a greater appreciation of the vegetable industry and how decisions at the state and federal level affect growers," she explained.

"We (growers) are often too busy focusing on our farm to



understand how the decisions that the IAC and HAL affect what happens on the farm."

"The IAC members offer a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience and I find working with them incredibly engaging and rewarding."

The Ellement family plans to sow more seeds of change in the future, with the next generation preparing to take on the business.

"The idea is that we will eventually sell the property to developers, as there are houses all around us now," Denise explained.

"My sons Ben and David will then set up together and use their combined knowledge to develop the business."

"Ben has already been

working at the farm for 10 years, after completing a mechanical apprenticeship. David worked as an Industry Development Officer in WA for 12 years after doing a Bachelor of Science and Honours and then worked in the wine industry. He now has his own contract business and provides business advice and support to vegetable growers and has recently started to work with us on the farm."

While there have been trying times and transitions along the way, growing vegetables has remained at the heart of the Ellement family and that looks set to continue long into the future.



VALENTINI

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Supporting species

With Integrated Pest Management (IPM) gaining more support from growers, knowing which pesticides to use alongside the system can be difficult, writes Lisa Higginson. However, the findings of a recent report into the chemical effects on beneficial species in vegetables looks set to make it a lot easier.

Safeguarding crops from the onslaught of pests is an ongoing challenge for growers.

Pesticides have given great relief to many farms over the years, but the vegetable industry is now adopting more sustainable practices such as IPM in a bid to combat the problem.

As the industry begins to embrace these sustainable approaches and chemical companies manufacture more selective pesticides, growers and advisors are wanting to know the effects of such chemicals on beneficial species in order to maximise their

“ We wanted to provide information to growers about how they can use biological controls and pesticides in a compatible way. ”

preservation in crops.

A recent project led by Dr Paul Horne, of IPM Technologies Pty Ltd, set about to discover the acute and long-term impacts that pesticide applications have on the beneficial insects and mites that inhabit a range of vegetable crops to allow growers to implement and improve IPM on their farms.

The project titled *Pesticide effects on beneficial insects and mites in vegetables* was funded by The National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government. The research

was conducted in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

Dr Horne said: “One thing we hear quite commonly is that growers have taken IPM on but that it hasn’t worked. In many cases it was because they didn’t have enough information about the pesticides they were using.”

“We wanted to provide information to growers about how they can use biological controls and pesticides in a compatible way.”

“The aim was to focus the project on key beneficial species in vegetable crops and to provide growers with a proximity of the

effects of these products on beneficials—not to just say whether they are harmful or not.”

Dr Horne and his team of researchers began testing numerous pesticides for their impact on beneficial invertebrates. Laboratory bioassays were conducted to assess the survival and mortality of insects and mites treated with pesticides, while long-term tests investigated whether some pesticides affected reproduction in some species.

The following beneficial species were subjected to pesticide bioassays: Transverse ladybird, Common-spotted ladybird, White-collared ladybird, Predatory rove beetle, Brown lacewing, Damsel bug, Common hoverfly, *Persimilis*, *Cucumeris*, General aphid parasite, *Plutella* parasite, Potato tuber moth parasite and *Trichogramma*.

More than 300 bioassays were performed during the course of the project and a total of 24 pesticides were tested. The bioassays involved exposing beneficial species to pesticides at the label rate in the laboratory using a standardised sequential testing regime.

Dr Horne said: “Some of the results were very surprising and not obvious. For example, one product we tested was pretty

safe against everything, but when we tested it with a species of ladybird it killed 100% of the population—but it took five weeks to do so.”

“This is the reason why we think this testing needs to be done species by species and product by product.”

Dr Horne said the more interesting and currently important results were found among the modern selective insecticides, most of which caused highly variable levels of mortality across different beneficial species.

The only insecticide that was found to be harmless to all species in all acute tests was Dipel, an insecticide for Lepidoptera larvae. Insecticides commonly used in IPM for Lepidoptera pests (i.e. caterpillars) such as Avatar, Proclaim and Success caused highly variable mortalities to beneficial species in acute bioassays.

For example, Avatar was lethal to ladybirds (77-96% mortality) but harmless to Brown lacewings and *Trichogramma* wasps.

Similarly, Proclaim was lethal to Damsel bugs (100%) and *Trichogramma* (100%), but only caused low mortality to ladybirds (<16%) and Brown lacewings (24%). Success was found to be lethal to *Trichogramma* (97-

99%) and Hoverflies (100%), but mostly harmless to other species tested.

Three newer products released during the life of the project, Belt, Coragen and Movento, were all found to be harmless to Brown lacewings, Transverse ladybirds and Damsel bugs. However, fecundity bioassays would need to be completed to confirm their safety to populations of these.

Several selective insecticides were also found to be harmful only by a particular method of exposure, so not when sprayed directly onto specimens but as a residue.

Longer-term fecundity bioassays sometimes revealed negative impacts on species that did not show up in acute tests. For example, although Pirimor caused very low mortality (8%) to Damsel bugs when directly applied, it significantly reduced the number of eggs laid by females.

And although Confidor caused low mortality (20%) to lacewings in acute tests, it significantly reduced survival of individuals to maturity.

In addition to insecticides, other pesticides such as fungicides and herbicides were also found to negatively affect beneficial species.

Dr Horne said: “The findings from this project should

increase the success rate of growers attempting to undertake IPM. It should help them make much more accurate decisions and, more importantly, avoid choosing a product that will wipe out a key beneficial species in their crop.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

- In order to assist IPM systems, growers need to be aware of the effects of chemicals on beneficial insects and mites to enable them to maximise their preservation in crops.
- Dr Paul Horne, of IPM Technologies, led a project to test pesticides for their impact on beneficial species so growers can use the findings to choose products that are most compatible with their IPM system.
- The results showed that most pesticides produced variable levels of mortality among beneficial species, with some species remaining unharmed while others were killed. Long-term tests also revealed the effects of pesticides on offspring.

i For more information:
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IPM Technologies Pty Ltd
Phone: (03) 9710 1554
Email : <ipmtechnologies@bigpond.com>
Project number: VG06087



Damsel bug. Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Young Grower Ben Walker

Name: Ben Walker

Age: 24

Grows: Cabbage, silver beet, leeks, spinach, Dutch carrots, beetroot and turnips

Situated: Loch, South Gippsland, Victoria

You come from a long line of vegetable growers—was it something you always wanted to do?

I have always lived on the market garden; first when we lived at Langwarrin at my granddad's property and then when we bought the property where we are now in South Gippsland.

I have always been on the farm and involved in some way or another when I was growing

Growing vegetables is in the blood for Ben Walker, who is following in the footsteps of three generations before him, writes Lisa Higginson. The young grower talks to *Vegetables Australia* about carving out a career at his family's South Gippsland farm and how he has swapped tractors for text books to get a head start in horticulture.

up, so I naturally moved into growing when I left school.

What prompted you to go and study?

I started doing a horticultural degree part-time at TAFE when I left school, but during the first year the university closed it down. I went back and worked full-time on the farm for the next five years, but I always felt I had left the study unfinished.

We have been through a pretty bad drought during the last few years and it's been very stressful. It made me realise that I would like to have a guarantee for the future if things got really bad. I also felt that I needed to learn and gain more knowledge to deal with these

types of challenges that growers face.

I have had to move to Melbourne for uni, so I miss being on the farm and working. I am in the second year of my degree now, but when I finish I will go back to work on the farm.

What are the things you enjoy most about being a vegetable grower?

I love being outside and that's a great benefit of the job. Working on a farm is always busy and there is always something different to do; it is not a monotonous job at all. I also like that there is a lot of problem solving involved, which keeps your mind going and keeps you on the ball.

What job would you be doing if you weren't growing?

There are so many jobs in the industry that I have discovered over the past few years and I could see myself doing some of those if I wasn't on the farm.

I know I would definitely be doing something related to horticulture, even if it wasn't growing.

What do you think are the challenges faced by young growers coming into the industry?

For a young person wanting to come into the industry there are no real horticulture degrees for them to study at university,

as many have disappeared due to lack of numbers. I think this makes it quite difficult. I would have preferred to do a horticulture degree instead of an agriculture degree, but there were very few options and it would have meant relocating far away.

I think it would benefit the industry as a whole if there were more options for people to study horticulture, and if the industry was promoted more to kids while they were at school.

You attended the AUSVEG-led USA Grower Study Tour in 2009 and the Germany and Netherlands Grower

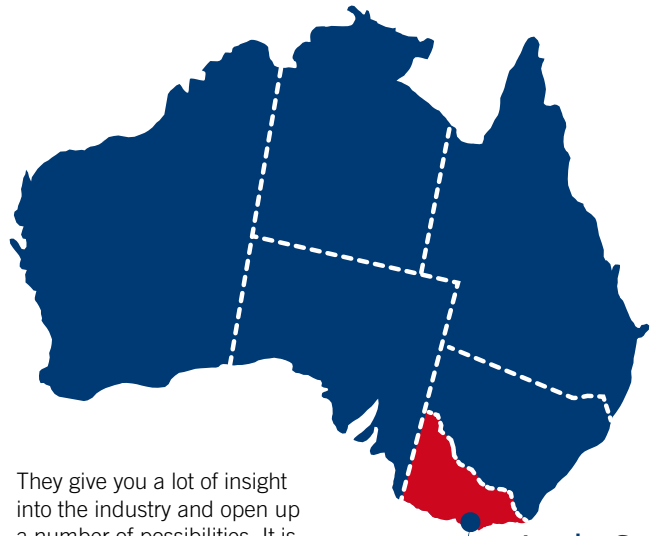
Study Tour in February- how did you find the experiences and would you recommend the tours to others?

The tour in California was great. It was amazing to see the up-scaling of the farms there and the different systems they use.

The size of the industry as a whole was very impressive.

I really enjoyed the tour to Europe this year as well. It was different as we got the chance to see more of the research side of the industry by visiting companies such as Bayer CropScience.

I would definitely recommend the tours to young growers.

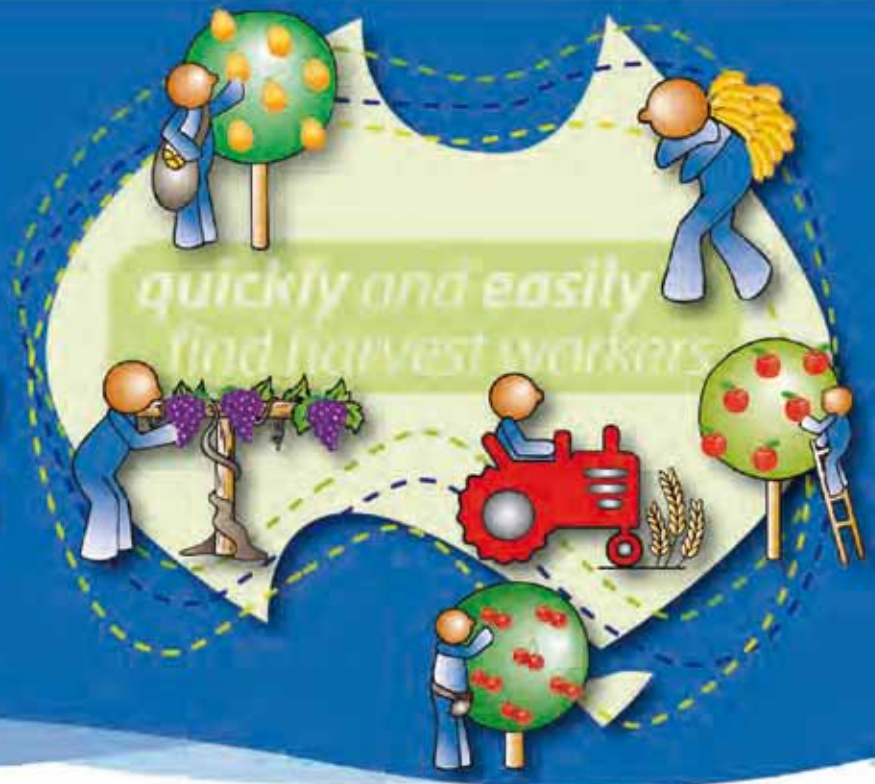


Loch, South Gippsland, Victoria

They give you a lot of insight into the industry and open up a number of possibilities. It is great to meet fellow growers as well, and you find you have a lot in common with people from all over the country.



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A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black vest over a red long-sleeved shirt and black pants, is smiling and leaning over a field of green leafy vegetables. The field is vast and stretches to the horizon under a cloudy sky. A small logo on her vest reads "CORRIGAN PRODUCE MARKET".

*Cultivating the way
for women in
horticulture*

A model for persistence, Deborah Corrigan's journey shows what one can achieve against the odds.



Deborah Corrigan has come a long way from the days of being told off by her brothers for getting involved in farm business.

Self-taught over many years, Ms Corrigan has become one of the industry's leaders, officially recognised in April at the AUSVEG National Convention with the 'Women in Horticulture Award' for her outstanding contribution to the industry.

"I got involved 20 years ago," said Ms Corrigan, who grows celery, lettuce, onions and silverbeet among other produce at Clyde in Victoria.

"I knew nothing. I lived on the farm, I played on the farm and I rode motorbikes on the farm, but I wasn't allowed near (the operations of) it. And then I made myself indispensable."

"I got more and more involved. I did a lot of short courses and made myself learn."

Like most in the industry, Ms Corrigan has continued to increase her knowledge as each year goes on.

"As dad got older, I had to learn how to do all of the varieties and salad mixes," Ms Corrigan said.

"Now I've got all of those lines to look after. We're really fanatical about keeping records. Each crop has a book and each page will have what we're planting, what varieties, where it's harvested et cetera."

Ms Corrigan attributes a large portion of what she has learnt to her father, a second generation grower.

"Dad is an unsung hero of the industry," she said.

"That's where I've learnt, watching and listening to dad. If we have any questions, we'll go and ask him."

"I think dad's one of the industry leaders, and I think a lot of people have followed what he's done."

Managing pests

As most growers can attest to, the management of pests and diseases in crops is a difficult act of juggling between synthetic and biological means.

The balancing of pest management techniques can be a source of frustration, with strong restrictions imposed on the use of off-use chemicals.

Steve Carter, who has been working with Ms Corrigan at Corrigan's Produce Marketing P/L until recently, said it was very important for a healthy balance to be struck.

"We know that there's a place for IPM management in horticulture and vegetable production, but it has to work hand in hand with the synthetics," he said.

"You can't have a totally synthetic regime and no biological regime. It has to work hand-in-hand."

An advantage of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) is that it is a system that integrates the use of pesticides, but only as support mechanisms.

For Ms Corrigan's operation, it meant that beneficials that attack smaller pests remain in the crops. This provided them with the ability to cut down on the use of other pesticides, such as those to control mites.

"Once we started using IPM, the beneficials were still there, and were still eating the mites, so we didn't need to use mite spray."

Providing product for a major retailer also proves to be a challenge for growers, who are required to prove there is no chemical residue in the crop and that the quality of the product is near perfect.

"It's got to be pristine," said Ms Corrigan.

"We had some leeks knocked out in Brisbane because of some weather damage on the leaves and because the roots were too long."

Given the challenges of the recent summer, small faults from weather damage proved difficult to avoid for growers down the eastern seaboard of Australia.

The results of this are far-reaching, felt especially by the environment.

"Being a business that is on the ball and manages its business well is very important to the environment," Mr Carter said.

"If you're not, you get a lot of waste, and that—probably in manufacturing—is the biggest worry for the environment—throwing out all the waste." Managing product waste, however, can prove to be a positive when dealt with properly.

"Some of the waste we'll keep and give it to the local farmers to feed their cows," she said. "It helps them, it's a double help," said Mr Carter.

"The guy down the road who's struggling for water gets some relief as well."

Recycling extends beyond food waste as well, with an increase in recycling of paper products on the farm.

"We're recycling more," Ms Corrigan said.

"The people on the farm have gotten used to separating the packaging. A lot of the cardboard comes in the packaging, just to hold it together. It's not actually our waste, it's the packaging company's waste."

Further issues arise on the farm with the use of wax boxes. Used for storing particularly heavy loads and withstanding humidity in cool rooms, wax boxes can't be recycled, which means they end up in general waste.

In an attempt to avoid using wax boxes in cool rooms, Ms Corrigan has experimented with different types of cardboard products.

"We did some trials with high-grade heavy board, and it just didn't last," Mr Carter said.

"It didn't last in our cool room because the board was pulling in the moisture. We're always looking for innovation on that side of things. One of the most expensive things we've got is wax-grade card."

Due to the fact that boxes can't be re-used because of food safety regulations, it is important that people such as Ms Corrigan continue to create new and innovative ways to improve environmental practice on-farm.

Striving to do so can not only benefit the environment, but prove to be a help in reducing the effect on the bottom line.

Inaugural Environmental Award winner announced

Five years as a member of EnviroVeg has seen Rodney Emerick emerge as a leader in the industry.

Rodney Emerick has long been a proponent of environmentally friendly farming.

Involved with EnviroVeg since its early days, Mr Emerick, Joint CEO of Mulgowie Farming Company, believes that he is certainly not alone in placing a high importance on how the environment is treated in horticulture.

“I think growers generally are (environmentally friendly),” Mr Emerick said.

“I think it’d be fair to say that I really just consider that we’re going about it as growers doing our normal business.”

Mulgowie Farming Company delivers produce from over 10,000 acres of land along the east coast of Australia.

Started in 1982 by Mr Emerick’s parents, John and

Dell, the business has since grown to be one of the largest farming operations in the country.

Mr Emerick (pictured below) is based at the company’s Bowen farm that crops roughly 2,000 hectares of vegetables that include beans, sweetcorn and pumpkins.

Here, they have been using Controlled Traffic Farming and Minimum Tillage for the past four years. This comes with its own challenges, but for Mulgowie Farming Company, they intend to continue in the hope that the effort will pay off.

Along with Mulgowie’s size and success comes a mantra of ensuring its practices are sustainable and have a positive impact on the environment.

Despite the keen sense of protecting the environment,

Mr Emerick admitted to being surprised following the announcement that he had won the inaugural Environmental Award.

Presented at the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence to company representative Rick Moores, Mr Emerick said they must be doing something right, despite his best efforts to understand what that was.

“I wouldn’t have said that we were leaders in the field as such, although I don’t know about what other growers are doing,” Mr Emerick said.

“Obviously what we are doing—not that I publicised it that well—has made an impact on those people that make the decisions about who gets the award.”

Mr Emerick said that there were many growers around the country who didn’t get any recognition like this, despite working just as hard on protecting the environment.

For Mr Emerick, this comes down to one thing.

“I don’t think growers necessarily deliver the message of how environmentally sound their practices are,” he said.

“That message isn’t delivered that well.”

For now at least, one farmer has received the recognition he deserves.

Through this column the EnviroVeg will continue to promote the existing and emerging practices that growers are demonstrating all around Australia.



EnviroVeg a hit at Convention

EnviroVeg booth attracts growers from around Australia at the AUSVEG National Convention Trade Show.

As part of the Trade Show at the AUSVEG National Convention, the EnviroVeg booth provided attendees with an insight into how the program can benefit their on-farm operations.

The EnviroVeg booth consisted of numerous tools introducing growers to the program, including the EnviroVeg Manual and various guides encouraging sustainable farming practices.

The three days of the Trade

Show saw many growers and industry personnel visit the booth, with numerous people indicating their interest in the program.

EnviroVeg is the vegetable industry's own environmental management program developed specifically for vegetable growers to demonstrate that they are good environmental managers.

Through a series of self-assessment tools that are recorded by AUSVEG, growers

are sent an annual scorecard by which to judge their performance.

It is hoped that the increased interest shown in the program at the Convention will translate into an increased number of participants working to better protect the environment through their on-farm activities.

With an increased focus on environmentally-friendly agriculture, there are significant benefits of joining EnviroVeg.

Such benefits include: Proven

environmental credibility to stakeholders and consumers; easy integration into existing farm management strategies and food safety programs; and up-to-date information and assistance to members.

i For more information or to register to EnviroVeg, please contact AUSVEG on
Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Email: <info@ausveg.com.au>

Carbon tax the topic of conversation

How the debate about the carbon tax will play out for environmentally conscious vegetable growers is still unclear.

The AUSVEG National Convention saw both Deputy Leader Tony Abbott and Senator Barnaby Joyce, leader of The Nationals in the Senate, voice their concern about the federal government's proposed carbon tax. The issue was also covered by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, The Hon. Joe Ludwig, at the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence in his keynote address. At this stage there is plenty of confusion about the proposed tax, so the EnviroVeg Program thought it prudent to clarify the current status of the tax—as it is a key environmental issue—by outlining its potential implications for the industry.

The proposed carbon tax is set to be implemented over a three to five-year period beginning in 2012, with the price of carbon still yet to be formally announced.

At this stage it appears that agriculture has been exempt from the scheme and will not be directly affected by the imposition of a carbon price, however, there is speculation that agriculture may be included under the scheme in future.

Speaking to a capacity audience at the AUSVEG Convention, Senator Barnaby Joyce said that Australia's contribution to global warming was not significant enough to warrant taxing the population.

It is unclear at this stage if any commercial revenue stream can be obtained from minimising emissions on-farm, however, Prime Minister Julia Gillard has indicated that the federal government wishes to work with farmers in the agricultural community to make sure they get the benefits of changing practices.

Prime Minister Gillard announced on 14 August 2010 an election commitment to establish the Carbon Farming Initiative to give farmers, forest growers and landholders access to domestic and international carbon markets.

Consultation into the proposed initiative recently closed.

The carbon tax will initially be a straight tax and then will move to a cap-and-trade system after three to five years. The government has not changed its target of a five per cent reduction in emissions by 2020.

A vegetable carbon calculator designed to allow vegetable growers to calculate their carbon footprint may be helpful for growers wishing to learn more about how different inputs on their farm can affect greenhouse gas emissions.

The calculator is accessible from www.vegiecarbontool.com.au. It was funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

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Bumpy road to a

Industry Economist and leader of the Vegetable Industry Development Program Economics of a bright future for Australia's economy.

Good economic times are here and the party is just beginning.

Despite earthquakes, Middle East tensions, the ongoing financial crisis in Europe, floods in much of Australia and drought in the south west, economists are remarkably upbeat about the Australian economy. The hit taken from recent domestic climatic events is expected to be short lived.

A survey of economists conducted by the Australian Financial Review has economic growth accelerating with a median forecast of 2.5% this financial year and 3.9% in 2011-12. The economy is expected to grow strongly on the back of a resources boom and continuing high prices for Australian commodities.

The official forecaster on commodity prices, the Australian Bureau of Agriculture

and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), is bullish on commodity prices and expects the value of both farm and mineral exports to rise strongly over this and the next financial year. Continuing strong

which will be used to drive further investment in a booming economy.

Agriculture is also surfing this prosperity. There is a newfound optimism in rural Australia associated with the breaking of

and unemployment?

To Australian vegetable growers, these are surreal discussions. Whether out in the fields or delivering vegetables to market at some unseemly hour of the morning, the economic factors impacting on their operations are nothing but a hard slog.

Some growers will feel the impact of recent climatic events for a long time to come, while others will have their profits impacted by unseasonal weather and varying degrees of pest and disease factors that need to be overcome. Procuring labour at present does not appear to be a widespread issue, but it has the potential to be so.

Fresh in growers' minds will be the difficulties they had in securing labour in the years before the onset of the global financial crisis and the drainage of labour from agriculture to the mining sector and related developments.

The focus by AUSVEG, the events at the 2011 National Convention and the March/April edition of *Vegetables Australia* on the issue of mechanisation and reduction in labour costs has been timely in emphasising the need to reduce labour input and costs.

Driving down costs through innovation and efficiency gains remains an imperative for the long-term profitability of vegetable growers. Input costs apart from labour are on the rise. Most notable will be a lift in electricity prices as electricity generators seek funds to undertake large investments in

“ Driving down costs through innovation and efficiency gains remains an imperative for the long-term profitability of vegetable growers. ”

growth in Asia, especially in China and India, will underpin this boom supported by a rebound in the American economy. Australia is being hit with a tsunami of money from this commodity boom,

the drought in eastern Australia and strong prices for a range of agriculture products. The psychological impact of these developments should not be underestimated, nor the improved incomes that are being generated.

The latest Rabobank survey of farmer attitudes has optimism among farmers at a near record high, with most farmers expecting better conditions going forward and increased income.

Australia's economic problems are ones of prosperity. How do we manage the deluge of wealth descending on the economy? How do we grow our businesses in an economy already close to full employment and with a substantial fall in the level of immigration? How can we avoid the fate of past commodity booms which were dissipated in inflation and ended in recession

Imports of fresh and chilled vegetables

Vegetable	July 2009 – January 2010 (kgs)	July 2010 – January 2011 (kgs)
Onions And Shallots	6,608,000	11,062,000
Garlic, Fresh Or Chilled	6,348,000	5,937,000
Tomatoes	890,169	1,739,598
Capsicum	1,163,975	1,656,308
Asparagus	717,818	836,440
Mushrooms & Truffles	558,143	789,201
Peas	801,315	666,917
Beans	419,240	299,456
Beetroot, Salsify, Celeriac, Radish & Similar Edibles	132,123	206,857

Source of Data: Australian Bureau of Statistics/ World Trade Atlas

prosperous future

sub-program, Ian James, discusses the challenges that lie ahead for growers amid forecasts

capacity, which has been under-resourced for the last decade.

Fuel prices may be artificially high due to tensions in the Middle East, but, if economist's forecasts are half right, stronger world economic growth is going to support an elevated price level for diesel and petrol. In this climate it is difficult to prevent upward pressure on chemical and fertiliser prices.

Then there is the carbon tax. While not applying directly to vegetable growing, inputs will be affected. Although it will not be introduced this year, as the picture becomes clearer, producers of inputs into vegetable growing will adjust their prices to reflect what they see as its impact. Of course, we are yet to see the details of the compensation package the government will introduce and what, if any, credits may be earned. But vegetable growers,

like all producers, will need to consider adjustments to their operations as Australia moves to a lower carbon economy.

Economists are also universal in forecasting that the Reserve Bank of Australia will increase interest rates. The arguments are over the timing, not the actuality. While the banks are starting to open up their lending books, the loan is likely to come at a higher cost or with greater security.

As if these pressures were not enough, vegetable growers are also having to cope with a more discerning consumer. Australian households have discovered the virtue of saving.

The accompanying graph plotting the level of household savings shows a remarkable turnaround in consumer behaviour. Paying down debt and saving is the new mantra. Consumers are still

spending and they still have to eat, but they are weighing up consumption against other priorities. Value for money is the name of the game, while price and quality are the newfound benchmarks against which consumers make their purchases.

Finally, the high value of the Australian dollar is making it cheaper to import and making life more difficult on export markets. Competition from imports is intensifying for some fresh vegetables, while strong import pressure continues in frozen and processed vegetables.

The value of fresh imports of vegetables was \$46 million in the first seven months of this financial year, compared to \$33 million in the corresponding period of last year. In volume terms, rises were recorded in imports of onions and

shallots, asparagus, tomatoes, capsicums, mushrooms and beetroot et al. The large volume of garlic imports from China was maintained despite a substantial rise in its price in Australian dollar terms.

In summary, vegetable growers will need to pay attention to their business model and levels of profitability. Despite economic indicators suggesting a strong economy, vegetable growers are facing challenges on costs, demand and import competition.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A survey of economists conducted by the Australian Financial Review has economic growth accelerating with a median forecast of 2.5% this financial year and 3.9% in 2011-12. It is expected that the economy will grow on the back of continuing high prices for Australian commodities.
- Despite predictions of a prosperous future, vegetable growers are set to encounter economic challenges such as rising electricity costs, changing consumer trends, potential impacts of carbon tax and the high value of the dollar resulting in cheaper imports.
- Vegetable growers need to pay attention to their business model, monitor levels of profitability and be proactive in finding ways to reduce costs.

Savings as a proportion of household disposable income



Source of Data: Australian National Accounts ABS Cat No.5206.0

i Ian James is Project Leader for the Economic Sub Program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program VIDP.
Project Number: VG08040

The challenges of climate change

Rohan Davies, Research and Product Development Manager at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, discusses the effects of climate change on vegetable growers.



Have you thought about climate change and your farm?

Vegetable growers may see many changes both directly and indirectly as a result of climate change. As well as potential changes to the production environment, such as changes in temperature, carbon dioxide levels, precipitation and winds, there are likely to be changes in policy aimed at reducing carbon emissions and encouraging carbon sequestration, as well as changes in consumer preferences.

The agricultural industry is estimated to account for 16 to 18 per cent of Australian emissions, but horticulture contributes only one per cent to this total, due to its smaller area

of land use.

Sources of greenhouse gases from horticulture can include:

- Fuel and electricity use, especially irrigation.
- Nitrogen fertilisers and animal manures.
- Waste and refrigerant loss to the atmosphere.

The potential physical impacts associated with climate change for vegetable growers include both opportunities and threats.

It may mean changes in timing of production and suitability of regions for cropping and changes to crop selection.

There may also be a risk of physiological disorders, incursions of new pests and the spread of soil-borne diseases.

There may need to be changes made in irrigation,

nutrient and soil management.

Climate change may bring a carbon fertilisation effect or increase growing season length and plant growth rates.

Regardless of your opinion of climate change, adjustments in government policies aimed at mitigating or reducing predicted climate change effects and in consumer preferences towards foods with a lower carbon footprint will have an impact.

Vegetable growers are being encouraged to think about reducing their impact by improving their efficiency of input use and using management practices that promote the goals of reduced emissions, productivity and sustainability. This could include efforts to improve the efficiency

of fuel and energy use, fertiliser use (particularly nitrogen) and irrigation and water use. It could also include using less packaging or sourcing packaging from recycled or recyclable materials.

Some growers are also creating carbon sinks to offset emissions by changing soil, irrigation and fertiliser management to maintain or increase soil carbon levels. Techniques for maintaining soil carbon levels include reducing tillage, growing cover crops and balancing nitrogen, phosphorus and sulphur inputs.

There is also the option of growing some permanent vegetation such as shelterbelts or long-term tree crops.

i Soil nutrition questions

Please send your soil nutrition questions to *Vegetables Australia* writer Lisa Higginson.

Email: lisa.higginson@ausveg.com.au

Phone: (03) 9822 0388



Dr Rob Mikkelsen with local agronomists Neels van Rensburg from Elders, Andrew Crawford, from Netafim, and Lee Freeman, of W H Bailey & Sons, at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers' inaugural Agronomy Community conference in Brisbane.



Dr Rob Mikkelsen urged Australian farmers and agronomists to improve fertiliser management before regulators stepped in to manage it for them.

Learning lessons in fertiliser... *from California*

Dr Rob Mikkelsen, Director of the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) for Western North America, shared his plant nutrition knowledge with Australian growers during a series of sessions organised by Incitec Pivot Fertilisers.

Growers and their agronomy advisers must continue to take a leading role in the management of plant nutrition to ensure sustainable food and fibre production or risk greater regulation of their activities.

This was the message from Dr Rob Mikkelsen, who spoke at the AUSVEG 2011 National Convention, as part of a series of plant nutrition masterclasses organised by Incitec Pivot Fertilisers.

Dr Mikkelsen has had extensive experience working with many crops and growing conditions across the US and, in addition to basic agronomic and fertiliser technology, his research has included interactions with the environment, animal waste management and nutrient budgets.

During his time in Australia, Dr Mikkelsen met with more than 50 plant nutrition agronomists and other leading agronomy researchers to share their insights at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers' inaugural Agronomy Community conference in Brisbane and also attended grower meetings in key farming areas, including northern Tasmania, Mildura and Bundaberg.

Dr Mikkelsen said the message for Australian farmers and agronomists was to improve fertiliser management before regulators stepped in to manage it for them.

"We've got to use the right source of nutrients, at the right rate, in the right place at the right time," he said.

"Use soil testing to assess the need for additional nutrients."

"Think about the crop's nutrient uptake over different growth stages and manage fertiliser applications to meet peak periods of demand."

"Consider the size of the crop's root system and tailor nutrient and irrigation strategies to suit. There are no magic solutions available to replace good agronomy work in plant nutrition."

Drawing on his expertise of plant nutrition in the US, Dr Mikkelsen explained that while crop yields would fall by 40 to 60 per cent without the use of commercial fertilisers, there was a widespread lack of understanding in the community about the role fertilisers played in supporting the world's growing need for food and fibre.

On the other hand, he said

the over-use and misuse of fertilisers was known to be detrimental to the environment.

Dr Mikkelsen described how the use of fertilisers was becoming increasingly regulated. In particular, he said regulations were being developed in California to meet the state's commitment to the Kyoto protocol, as well as minimise nitrate levels in water systems.

"In California, the government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020," said Dr Mikkelsen.

"One of its targets is to reduce nitrous oxide emissions from agriculture by five per cent, because an estimated 60 per cent of nitrous oxide emissions come from denitrification losses in crops such as cotton, almonds and wheat."

Nitrous oxide is recognised as 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

"How emissions will be regulated is not yet clear," Dr Mikkelsen said.

"European research is telling us that simple nitrogen rate reductions may not be the best means."

"High nitrogen rates are not

the real concern; it is the nitrogen that exceeds the crop's uptake demand that poses the greatest risks."


In another example, he described the regulation of nitrogen use in the Salinas Valley in California, where vegetable growers harvested up to three crops per year.

Dr Mikkelsen said surface water testing had shown up to 46 milligrams of nitrogen per megalitre, when 10 mg/mL was the standard for drinking water in California.

He explained that after mandatory farmer education programs failed to produce significant improvements in water quality, tougher measures were put in place.

"Under these regulations, all farmers must complete nitrogen budgets and their plans must be certified by a qualified third party to ensure the inputs and outputs remain within balance."

"As agronomists, we know it takes the right management to achieve 50 per cent plant utilisation of applied fertiliser, but these regulations demand 100 per cent utilisation."

 For further information about Dr Mikkelsen's speech, see <http://anz.ipni.net>



Young Growers' Study Tour 2011 New Zealand



23 July - 2 August 2011*

Young Australian vegetable growers will be given the opportunity of a lifetime to travel to New Zealand as part of the Young Growers' Study Tour. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with leading New Zealand growers and visit a variety of leading vegetable farms on the North Island. Growers will also attend the Horticulture New Zealand Conference from 26-27 July in Rotorua. A full itinerary will be provided on the receipt of your expression of interest.

*Register your
interest here!*

- Expressions of interest welcomed

For further information or for expressions of interest, please contact AUSVEG on (03) 9822 0388 or email info@ausveg.com.au.



* Dates may change



A fruitful investment

Cucumber growers don't have to break the bank to see significant increases in the quality and quantity of yields of their greenhouse-grown crops, writes David Hastie.

Dr Sophie Parks, of the NSW Department of Primary Industries, set out to answer the important questions surrounding the significance of investing in new greenhouse technologies on yields and the economics of crop production.

The results of the final report titled *Improving greenhouse systems and production practices (greenhouse technology systems component)* make compelling reading for growers.

The project was funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

Dr Parks, a plant physiologist, used four separate greenhouses—ranging from limited control of the greenhouse environment to the very best growing conditions.

At the bottom end of the scale, the research team simulated a basic model, which included closing the greenhouse up at night and opening it up during the day to allow cross-ventilation.

In contrast, they set up a greenhouse with heating and cooling technologies, which included an evaporative system, and utilised automatic changing of the conditions to achieve the target conditions considered

we could get in the greenhouse that are available to us here.”

“With the high technology, we simulated the conditions the cucumbers like, which is around 80 per cent humidity, and made sure the temperature

summer and winter.

Particularly in winter, the yield of cucumbers in terms of total weight and total number was significantly increased by improving conditions beyond those typical of low technology greenhouses.

“We made sure we got the winter scenario and the summer scenario and the in between,” Dr Parks said.

“In winter, the poor old tunnel house simulation got down to very low temperatures at night, which affected the crop and slowed it down significantly.”

“There were real visible differences in that experiment. We took all the data on yield production from those three experiments and we looked at what was marketable and what was unmarketable.”

“What we found was that if you move from your low-tech greenhouse to a medium technology greenhouse, your investment in the technology is worthwhile from a financial perspective.”

Dr Parks said that the results

“There are certain characteristics of medium to high technology greenhouses that allow the conditions inside the greenhouses to be more conducive to productive cucumber growth.”

perfect for growing.

“We set them up ourselves and had four greenhouses exactly the same, but what we had was the technology varied greatly in each of them,” Dr Parks said.

“We had the most basic of most basic to the best controls

was always between about 15 degrees and no more than 35 degrees, which is the range that cucumbers like.”

Dr Parks conducted three simulated growing seasons for cucumbers in Gosford, with the experiments incorporating both the seasonal extremes of

provided clear evidence of the economic benefit of improving greenhouse systems, but growers wouldn't have to fork out the big bucks to upgrade to a high-tech system.

Interestingly, a move towards a medium technology-based industry was all that was required to maximise a grower's return, she explained.

"Our results indicate that for every dollar invested in shifting from a 'no control' to 'minimal control' greenhouse, \$65.70 per square metre is returned," Dr Parks said.

"For every dollar invested in shifting from a 'minimal control' to a 'moderate control' greenhouse, \$1.70 per square metre is returned for every dollar invested."

Dr Parks said the economic analysis showed that investing in new technology to shift from a 'no control' greenhouse to a medium technology greenhouse was beneficial over the life of the technology and would see growers reap long-term financial rewards.

"We aimed the project at the sector of the greenhouse industry who were in the low to

medium technology part of the industry," Dr Parks said.

"So that included people who were in tunnel houses, with very simple irrigation systems. But also people with slightly more sophisticated systems with houses that are fairly new and with good height on them."

"There are certain

“I guess the aim of the work we do is to get growers to be more productive and more efficient with the resources that they have.”

characteristics of medium to high technology greenhouses that allow the conditions inside the greenhouses to be more conducive to productive cucumber growth."

Dr Parks said the ultimate aim of the research was to see growers make the most of the relevant technology available to them, without over-capitalising.

"I guess the aim of the work we do is to get growers to be more productive and more efficient with the resources that they have," she said.

"So by doing that, they are more profitable. But what they were lacking was the evidence and hard data that said, 'Well, if you do invest in this technology,

in the long term you will become more profitable and more productive'."

"No one had done that work before, so that is what we did."

Dr Parks will deliver the conclusions of her research at the National Conference for Hydroponic and Greenhouse Growers in July at Adelaide's Convention Centre.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Dr Sophie Parks of the NSW Department of Primary Industries conducted research to determine the significance of investing in new greenhouse technologies on yields and the economics of crop production.
- Experiments showed that yield of cucumbers (total fruit weight and total number) is significantly increased by improving conditions beyond those typical of low technology greenhouses.
- The research clearly pointed to a strong relationship between the quality of the conditions in the greenhouse and the production of marketable yields. Increasing plant density increased yields, regardless of the level of greenhouse control.

i For more information:
 Dr Sophie Parks
 Gosford Primary Industries Institute
 NSW Industry and Investment
 Locked Bag 26 Gosford NSW 2250
 Project Number: VG07145



Ask the industry



with
Scott Mathew

Technical Services Lead from Syngenta

Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead from Syngenta, answers the tough questions from Australian growers.

Question: What might help me improve my application technique?

Conducting successful on-farm application trials requires a significant commitment of time and resources. Although at first it can seem time consuming, the overall results for growers can be extremely valuable.

At Syngenta we spend a lot of time—at both a global and local level—supporting growers who wish to conduct trials like these.

A successful trial of new technology on ‘their own patch’ provides growers with an opportunity to advance their farming operations using specific knowledge gained for cropping systems and management practices that are unique to them.

Question: How can I evaluate the value of new nozzle technology?

In order to evaluate new nozzle technology, your spray equipment should be calibrated and well maintained. The aim is to compare what you are currently doing in terms of application—i.e. nozzle type, water rate and ultimately spray coverage—with a range of different spray nozzles to improve the application of your crop protection products and ultimately your results.

Research conducted in the UK by Syngenta has shown that with a simple change in nozzle technology, the level of disease, insect or weed control can be increased significantly over and above standard practices when all other parameters remain constant.

Question: How effective is using water-sensitive paper to assess application technology?

Water-sensitive paper is a quick and easy way to determine what effect the changes you have made to your equipment will have on the performance of a crop protection product application. The paper

can be placed in various sections of the crop canopy (upper and lower leaves, as well as inner and outer canopy) to measure coverage and, critically, spray penetration into the canopy, particularly to lower leaves, where diseases such as Sclerotinia can be found. Results are easily observed and necessary changes can be made immediately to ensure better results.

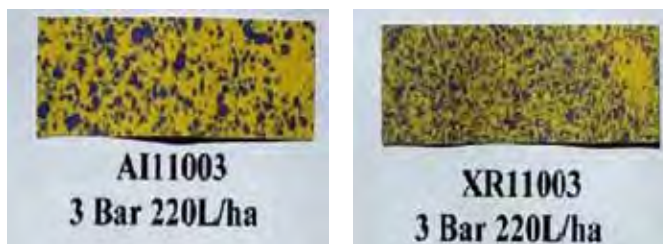


Figure 1: Water-sensitive paper showing spray coverage and pattern from different nozzles. Adjustments to water volumes and nozzle orientation can improve coverage and spray penetration, whilst reducing the risk of spray drift.

The adoption of new technology—particularly in the form of spray application—has some significant benefits. But don't rely on others to do the work for you; an investment in time by setting up your own trial can pay substantial dividends in the future.

Ask the industry

If you have a question that you would like addressed, please ring Syngenta on 1800 067 108 or email *Vegetables Australia*: <lisa.higginson@ausveg.com.au>

Please note that your questions may be published.

A rich source of information about vegetable growing regions in Australia

Each region has detailed information including:

- Climate
- Water Supply
- Irrigation scheme
- Groundwater
- Soil Types

Main Vegetable crops by Area, Volume and Estimated GVP
Interactive maps showing water resources, irrigation and landuse

www.watersustainability.com.au



Region	Area (ha)	Volume (t)	Estimated GVP (\$M)
Adelaide	1,200	1,200	1,200
Albury	1,500	1,500	1,500
Bundaberg	2,000	2,000	2,000
Canberra	1,800	1,800	1,800
Geelong	1,600	1,600	1,600
Gold Coast	1,400	1,400	1,400
Griffith	1,300	1,300	1,300
Hamilton	1,100	1,100	1,100
Launceston	1,000	1,000	1,000
Melbourne	1,700	1,700	1,700
Perth	1,900	1,900	1,900
Shepparton	1,500	1,500	1,500
Tamworth	1,200	1,200	1,200
Traralgon	1,100	1,100	1,100
Wagga Wagga	1,300	1,300	1,300
Warragamba	1,400	1,400	1,400
Wentworth	1,600	1,600	1,600
Yarrawonga	1,700	1,700	1,700



Around the states

Queensland



Call for end to complacency on fruit and vegetable imports

At ABARES' Outlook Conference in Canberra last month, Federal Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig announced that a National Food Plan would be developed by the National Food Policy Working Group over the next few months for comment by interested food industry stakeholders.

As part of this conversation, Growcom has launched a food security report which highlights key issues from the horticulture industry's perspective.

We highlighted the worrying trend in food imports, with up

to 34 per cent of fruit and 19 per cent of vegetables that are consumed in Australia now imported.

Successive governments have proclaimed the success of Australian agricultural exports as a sign there are no threats to Australian food security. However, the figures used to support these arguments are biased by a small number of heavily export-focused industries (e.g. meat and grains). The picture when it comes to consumption and trade data for horticulture is vastly different and reflects the severe economic and regulatory pressures on the industry.

This is not a call for protectionism. Australia continues to benefit from efforts to gain greater access to overseas markets for our produce and work must continue to free-up trade and end overseas food production

subsidies which foster the dumping of product on our markets.

This is a call to be part of the food solution in future years, rather than part of the problem. Given constructive policy settings, Australia could do much more to help feed the world's burgeoning population and earn valuable income in the bargain.

On the domestic front, we agree with Mr Ludwig that a priority under the plan should be action to remove the plethora of superfluous regulation that is duplicative or operating at cross purposes, in order to improve productivity and cost efficiency of food production.

The challenge to feed more people with the same or less land and water in the future will also require an increase in research and development funding from both private and public sources to at least 1970s

levels of five per cent of the gross value of agricultural production.

Other major issues for horticulture may be read in Growcom's report, Food security issues for the Australian horticulture industry, which is available on the Growcom web site at www.growcom.com.au

The food security project was funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) as part of the across industry program. The Australian Government provides matched funds for all HAL's R&D activities.

Alex Livingstone
Chief Executive Officer
Growcom

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Victoria



The change of state government in Victoria brought about a renewed move to convince the new Minister for Special Projects, The Hon. Dr Denis Napthine, that the market community in general does not want a relocation of Melbourne Markets to Epping. There is still no confidence that previous representation to government was not the voice of the total market user groups. Although construction work at Epping is forging ahead, those trading at the Footscray Road Market are still in the dark and do not know what costs they will incur in order to successfully maintain a business operation at the

proposed Epping site.

The turnout at a recent grower vegetable levy payer meeting in Melbourne was disappointing, with a poor attendance from major levy payers. This was a great opportunity for levy payers to provide an input and identify R&D priorities over the next five years and recommend future directions of the levy fund to benefit the vegetable industry. This is your vegetable industry levy contribution, so take the opportunity and make your requirements known.

The federal government is presently reviewing and harmonizing the control of use of agriculture and veterinary chemicals. Victoria's system for off-label chemical usage is under fire with opposition from other states. Victoria is currently the only state that generates residue monitoring data that is publicly reported. To our knowledge, other states had no data to back-up their objections to the Victorian system.

Through our affiliation with VFF, it is believed that a workable approach is achievable similar to the system in Victoria, with the ability under certain circumstances to use chemicals off-label where there is no chemical registered or no permit exists in minor crops.

Vegetable growers' support is needed to ensure that Victoria maintains off-label use to control pest and disease.

It is interesting to note the report that wholesale prices of vegetables has increased by up to 17.3 per cent over the past year. Unfortunately, from farm gate reports this increase has not filtered down to the vegetable grower. Cost of production continues to rise and the proposed introduction of a carbon tax will subject growers to a further 15-20 per cent increase at the farm gate.

The Victorian-funded HIN Project and the HAL funded CIO program are working effectively in tandem through our two

Industry Development Officers.

Regular farm visits, meetings and direct communications are enabling vegetable growers to receive a regular flow of industry information and direct on-farm contact.

Take the opportunity and make contact with Helena Whitman IDO West, Tel: 0407 772 299 and Slobodan Vujovic IDO East, Tel: 0422 583 784.

For the latest in vegetable industry information for Victoria, take a look at our web site www.vegetablesvictoria.com.au or www.vgavic.org.au

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Tasmania



Carbon farming legislation introduced to parliament

The federal government is moving ahead with its plans to establish a Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) and has introduced legislation to commence the framework.

Key changes from the original framework include a streamlined additionality test, improved investment certainty and extra protections against adverse impacts on food production, water availability, employment and biodiversity.

The government has clarified that abatement activities

that enhance agricultural productivity can meet the additionality test.

TFGA welcomes these changes, but remains concerned that this legislation is being pushed through at high speed when there is a need for ongoing consultation with the industry. With media commentary in the past week suggesting that agriculture needs to be included in a carbon tax scheme sooner rather than later, we are also wary of the CFI becoming a diversion from the very real impacts of a carbon tax onto farm budgets. The Greens have sought to refer the CFI legislation to a Senate Inquiry.

The Greens' concerns relate to both the potential of the bill to repeat the distortions in the land and water market caused by managed investment schemes and the potential to undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of the pollution

price.

Meanwhile, the government is standing by its commitment to introduce a carbon price on July 1, 2012 (with agriculture excluded for the time-being). Legislation is expected in the spring, although the full package and details of the carbon price are expected to be released prior to this.

TFGA Policy forum – June 2, 2011

Registrations are now open for TFGA's Policy Forum – our major event for 2011!

The forum will be a pathfinder in setting out Australia's options to ensure that its farmers can continue to provide sufficient high-quality food to meet domestic and world demand.

The presenters include:

- Professor Julian Cribb, one of Australia's leading science communicators;
- Bernard Salt, one

of Australia's leading demographers;

- Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute;
- Dr Tony Press, CEO Climate Futures for Tasmania; and
- Professor Anthony Arundel, Professor of Innovation at the Australian Innovation Research Centre at the University of Tasmania.

For more information visit www.tfga.com.au

Nick Steel

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Western Australia



The Western Australian vegetable industry in our southern regions continues to suffer a long, hot and dry period, which has had an impact on irrigation requirements and heat stress.

By contrast, the Carnarvon area continues to suffer from a spear-throated locust plague following the significant flooding events.

In spite of this, our industry can also report a range of positive news.

vegetablesWA is pleased that although there is a lot more work to be done, the release of the final WA Economic Regulatory Authority (ERA) report into water management and planning charges proves that our advocacy for the

vegetable industry is paying dividends.

The drafts of this report sought to claw back \$40 million in fees and charges. The work of vegetablesWA has ensured that the ERA now recommends that only \$14 million be recouped and that this be only for the "efficient cost" of issuing water licences and managing water resources rather than the outrageous claims of the draft reports.

The report also suggests the new fees be phased in over three years to allow growers time to adjust. This follows the advocacy of vegetablesWA three years ago, which resulted in the removal of a similar plan from the previous Labor government's upper house.

vegetablesWA has also been busy undertaking extension work under the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP). Growers are encouraged to contact our Field Extension Officer, Charlotte Butler, if they need

assistance or information on Research and Development that can help you. Charlotte's number is 0427 373 037.

The Vegetable Irrigation Scheduling System (VISS), which vegetablesWA is rolling out, is continuing to gain momentum. Those growers who have taken it up are reporting increased water use efficiency and its power as a planning tool. Please contact Charlotte for further information.

Progress is also being made on our three good practice demonstration projects on grower's properties in Carnarvon, the Swan Coastal Plain and the South West. Stay tuned for further information. vegetablesWA also recently organised an event in conjunction with the NSW Irrigators' Council, which brought four cutting-edge irrigators from the east coast to the west. Although some of their irrigation systems were very different to those on the west side, many growers picked

up some different ideas they hadn't previously considered.

The vegetablesWA marketing program is also reporting some real early successes. After initiating a Produce Marketing Group, which comprises of key WA organisations who engage in marketing vegetables such as Go for 2 & 5, Buy West Eat Best and the Perth Market Authority, we have now had two meetings and are seeing a much better sharing of ideas. It is hoped that vegetable marketing campaigns will be much better coordinated across WA in the future, which will bring value to our growers.

We have also had initial successful dealings in creating a retail revitalisation campaign.

Jim Turley

Executive Officer
vegetablesWA

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Email: cpga-vga@vegetableswa.com.au

South Australia



Quarantine road block decision reversed

Minister for Agriculture, The Hon. Michael O'Brien, has declared the night shifts at the Yamba (Riverland) and Ceduna (West Coast) Roadblocks would be retained.

Late last year, the government opted to remove the night shift as a result of stated 'significant reduction of risk achieved through the success of various measures', but has reversed the original decision. Outbreaks

of fruit fly in the eastern states have been the deciding factor to the change, which will now be addressed with combined services.

The alacrity of the state government over three decades has achieved a clean bill of health for SA from fruit fly.

It is imperative that the status quo remains to protect a key component of the horticulture industry.

Farm Card

Grow SA is in introductory discussions with the Agrifood Skills Council and AUSVEG to establish 'Farm Card', the equivalent of the construction industry's White Card and Green Card.

The Farm Card will be managed on a national database and provide each successful

applicant with an Accreditation Card, including photo ID to present when applying to work within the horticulture industry.

The accreditation will include skills specific to the industry as a whole, as well as some specific to the particular field of horticulture the person is entering.

A pilot of the scheme is being introduced for a group of applicants who have just achieved a Certificate II in Production Horticulture.

Accredited training provides the way

A group of 16 job seekers has the goal of full-time work growing in their sights after completing an eight-week hands-on course of Production Horticulture on the Adelaide Plains.

They have been assessed over a range of areas, both theory and practical application, with a two to three-week period of work experience on two local farms.

The host employers are very pleased with the group, and a high rate of engagement is anticipated as the group comes to the end of training.

The successful students will comprise the pilot group for the introduction of Farm Card.

Mike Redmond

Chief Executive Officer
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New South Wales



The NSW Farmers' Association has congratulated the NSW Liberal-National Coalition on its state election victory. The Association is looking forward to working with Premier Barry O'Farrell and the new leadership team, which includes Katrina Hodgkinson as Minister for Primary Industries. NSW again has a separate Department of Primary Industries, an Association request in the lead-up to the election.

The Association anticipates working with the new government to introduce policies that will create

conditions for farming in NSW to flourish.

In a win for horticulture, an announcement was made prior to the NSW State Election that grants, totalling approximately \$5 million, would be provided to orchardists in the Sydney Basin to help them install exclusion netting to protect their crops from Grey-headed flying-fox damage. Orchardists have suffered losses for more than 20 years because the ability to protect their crops was limited due to the Grey-headed flying-fox being listed as a threatened species.

The announcement followed a long campaign by an alliance of farmers, conservation and animal rights groups across NSW. It is pleasing that it has at last been recognised that it is not reasonable for farmers to effectively manage a threatened species at an enormous cost to

their businesses.

In recent months, the Association has been supporting the call to continue the eradication program for the Asian honey bee. The Asian honey bee is a threat to the European honey bee, which approximately 65 per cent of agricultural production in Australia relies upon for pollination. Many of our horticultural industries are dependent on pollination for most of their production. By the time you read this we should know the outcome of future eradication or management actions for Asian honey bee in Australia.

The Association is currently assisting the project team in delivering the vegetable levy-funded project 'Issues facing vegetable production in peri-urban areas', meeting with vegetable growers in the

Sydney Basin. It is important that urban planners consider primary production in peri-urban areas and that they have the right information when making land use decisions.

The Association's Horticulture Committee is beginning preparations for this year's Horticulture AGM and Annual Conference, which will be held on Monday, 18 July in Sydney. More information, including guest speakers, will be available in my next column.

Peter Darley

Chairman
NSW Farmers' Association
Horticulture Committee
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Fax: (02) 8251 1750

Calendar of events

June 2011

2 – 3 June

Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) 2011
Policy Forum

For more information:

Nardia Deverell
Phone: (03) 9822 0388

July 2011

19 – 21 July

NSW Farmers Association Annual Conference 2011
Horticulture AGM (18 July)

Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park.

For more information:

Visit: www.nswfarmers.org.au

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