



## Future of vegetable training in doubt... and National Expo may need new home

### **The practical training of young vegetable apprentices and trainees at Werribee, west of Melbourne, is being jeopardised due to a Victorian Government Department's lack of interest in supporting the industry.**

The Primary Industries Committee of Management, who manages the lease on the site's State land and buildings where practical industry training occurs, has failed to install a training provider since The Gordon Institute of TAFE withdrew the training facility and returned to Geelong in December 2008.

Horticultural Skills Australia (HSA) already has established facilities in Werribee and Melbourne; however the Werribee site is where all the vital practical training for the vegetable industry is administered. HSA's negotiations with the Government over the past 12 months have still provided no positive outcome to commence training courses.

Principle Executive Officer of HSA, John Brereton said the training course for 2010 had a list of students enrolled to begin the course at the Werribee site but, it had to be cancelled because there was nowhere for it to be run as no lease had been granted.

"We've been pursuing this for the best part of 12 months," Mr Brereton said. "(We want) to reinstate what was there before, in terms of an arrangement with the Gordon Institute and the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA) and prior to that Melbourne University and the VGA."

The campus is situated at Dairy Road off Sneydes Road at Werribee, adjacent to the old Gilbert Chandler Institute building, which includes portable classrooms used for training. The land used for practical training is also the venue of the National

Vegetable Expo, a successful biannual event due to be planned again for next year.

VGA Vic President, Luis Gazzola said with no training facility and lease signed the major vegetable event would have to find another home - which is not an easy feat for such an enormous event.

For almost 30 years, the Sneydes Road site has played a major part in educating young vegetable growers through accredited training programs. It is situated in the centre of prime vegetable country and is ideally positioned for growers to be able to "tap into" the training resources.

***"VGA Vic President, Luis Gazzola said with no training facility and lease signed the major vegetable event would have to find another home - which is not an easy feat for such an enormous event."***

But Mr Gazzola said that everyone was "ready to call it a day".

"We simply want to know if the lease can be renewed - surely this is not a hard question, especially as the Department involved has had close on two years to find an answer," Mr Gazzola said

"Representatives from local industry and VGA Vic have spoken to the Special Project Minister, who is also the region's local Minister, and still we get no answers.

"It will be of great disappointment to the vegetable industry if the Government does not want training to continue in Victoria."

As *Vegetables Victoria* went to print, Mr Brereton was still waiting to see lease documents which were allegedly being drawn up by the Government's legal people. ▼

## president's report

**I hope you and your families all had a safe and restful Easter.**

**Thank God the summer weather was not as hot as last year. Now with good autumn rains the crops should maintain their quality into winter.**

For most areas, the rains were a god send. In Bacchus Marsh it was a little too much, 150mm which caused flooding and some crops loses.

Unfortunately no rain in the western catchments has meant water allocations in Bacchus Marsh will still be very low.

The severe hail storm in March did not cause any severe damage to vegetable growing regions, however, some fruit blocks in the north east and eastern areas were badly damaged.

### Price fluctuations and unclear future

Since January 2009, the markets around Australia have been over supplied and prices have been poor. However, in the past month, prices have increased for most vegetables and we can only hope this continues through to winter and into spring. The vegetable growers urgently need a financial boost.

Looking ahead, the new Horticulture Industry Award (see our feature article Page 4), Woolworths and Coles Ethical Standards Policy, water issues and most importantly the right to farm are causing many growers to think twice about where the industry is going.

One thing I am certain of is that the cost of production will continue to rise; the big question is how can we pass the rising costs on? Our global competitors' cost of production is 45% to 85% lower.

The industry's next big problem is vegetable imports. Australia's free trade policy is going to destroy our industry and others unless the Federal Government imposes some sort of tariff on imports.

This would be no different to the rest of the world that impose tariffs on

Australia's exports to protect their own growers.

If the Federal Government doesn't impose tariffs on imports, like the rest of the world, then we may as well lock up shop and import fresh vegetables. Governments of Australia, is that what the citizens of Australia really want?

### Promoting the health 'kick' of vegetables

Following my visit to Fruit Logistica in Berlin last February it has made me more determined to pursue my idea of good marketing and promotion, especially pushing the health kick to eat fresh vegetables every day.



In February I met with the Greengrocers Victoria Executive and asked if they would support the idea of growers displaying placards in their shops showing photos of vegetable production, harvesting and packaging. The aim is to promote fresh vegetable production to consumers either through photos or DVDs. The Executive was in full support and I aim to meet with the Greengrocers Victoria Executive Officer, Mary Stewart to work out a plan.

After helping on the Melbourne Markets Promotional stand at both the Food and Wine Show and Harvest Festival at Werribee Mansion, I was amazed that up to 50% of the public had no idea how vegetables were grown, harvested, packaged and marketed.

Surely this is telling our industry that more marketing needs to be done to educate consumers about the virtues of Australia's "clean and green" vegetables and health benefits of eating them each day.

### IDO update

Our Industry Development Officers (IDOs) Ken Orr and Slobadan Vujovic are well underway in their new roles and have been out visiting growers and doing a great job in communication. They are continuing to spread the word that IDOs and VGA Vic are there for growers. Katie Fisher is slowly getting better from her series of operations and is gradually getting "back into the car".

Slobadan and I are looking forward to visiting the Lindenow growers next month, May 12 at the Lindenow Football Club Rooms. We thank local grower, Andrew Bulmer for being proactive and helping to initiate and organise the meeting. The aim is to establish an East Gippsland Vegetable Growers Group and the first official meeting is planned for July 7.

### 2010 National Convention

I hope to see some of you at the AUSVEG 2010 National Convention in May, from 27 to 30, at Jupiters Hotel Casino on the Gold Coast. We should make an effort to attend, if possible, and support this important industry event.

As always, please contact me, our Executive Officer, Tony Imeson or IDOs if you have any concerns or issues.

Thanking you all for your support and trust and, may God bless us all with good market prices and good health!

Luis Gazzola

See Page 8 for Executive Officer's Corner >

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DISCLAIMER: The purpose of *Vegetables Victoria* is to communicate to the Victorian Vegetable Industry a sample of the activities that are being carried out in the State in relation to the VGA Vic. and the National Vegetable Levy.

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*Vegetables Victoria* is written and published for the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria Inc. (ABN 80 851 723 010) by AgriHort Communications Pty Ltd (ABN 53 869 534 356)



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## International event highlights inefficiencies in government support

**“The Federal Government should hang its head in shame. The rest of the world carries their agriculture and horticulture industries in the palm of their hands and recognises them as vital food producers for their respective countries yet, what does ours do?”**

This was an obvious conclusion when Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria's President, Luis Gazzola recently visited the major fruit and vegetable annual trade fair - Fruit Logistica - at Berlin in Germany.

Fruit Logistica, held from February 3-5, is considered the most important business and communication arena for international fresh produce, with key decision makers, international leaders in agribusiness, supply chain representatives and government officials all in attendance.



Left: Luis Gazzola at Fruit Logistica  
Right: Luis (middle) and AusVeg CEO Richard Mulcahy (right) inspecting greenhouse produced vegetables.

Mr Gazzola was part of a Horticulture Australia partly funded grower group which also toured the vegetable production areas of Israel and Spain.



The grower group that toured vegetable farms in both Israel and Spain.

“For most of us Fruit Logistica was an eye opener, with 2200 exhibitors from 72 countries showing off their fruit and vegetable businesses,” he said.

“Most importantly these businesses, which highlighted to the world how they market, promote and package their products, were fully supported by their respective governments.

“I could not believe that the Federal Government did nothing to support Australian businesses attending the global event.”

For years, Mr Gazzola has believed Australian fruit and vegetable growers are treated like second class citizens by “our” governments.

“I am sick and tired of hearing our different Ministers for Agriculture saying that we must be more efficient and produce better quality product in order to gain global competitiveness in the export market,” he said.

“Our ministers can be very hypocritical and naive.”

The tour, also took Mr Gazzola and his group to open field farms and greenhouse enterprises in both Spain and Israel. After visiting these countries and seeing the way they manage, Mr Gazzola said he felt Australian vegetable growers were certainly up to world standards in production, presentation, packaging and value adding.

“The ongoing problem will always be our high cost of production, compared to other countries, which makes it difficult for us to be globally competitive,” he said. ▼

## Major construction contracts signed for Epping Market



Aerial view of the site of the new Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market at Epping.

Construction of the new \$300 million Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market at Epping, north of the city, is moving into the next phase, with the signing of major works contracts following the completion of early works this week.

Victoria's Major Projects Minister, Tim Pallas announced major construction contracts had been signed with preferred bidder Bovis Lend Lease and said the new stage of work was an important milestone for the markets project.

Bovis Lend lease commenced early site works onsite in late 2009 and have now been given the go ahead to commence full blown construction of the new facility.

The market is expected to be fully operational in 2012. ▼

# Industry prepares for new IR challenges and hurdles

## The much awaited Federal Government's new 'modern' Horticulture Industry Award (HIA) finally came into force on January 1, 2010.

The Award has been one of the most talked about issues in Australia's Horticulture Industry for the past 12 months, aside from water shortages.

As the Award was only released on December 23, 2009 by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (now Fair Work Australia), employers were only given seven days to absorb the content.

Some of the Award's new provisions that are causing serious concerns for employers and additional costs include an estimated increase in wage costs by as much as 30% and rises in piecework loadings from 12.5% to 15% and casual loadings from 15% to 25%.

Despite the strong lobbying of the Federal Government from both the Horticulture Industry's peak body, the Horticulture Australia Council (HAC), and industry bodies asking the Australian Industrial and Relations Commission (now Fair Work Australia) to amend the Award to accommodate seasonal demands and weather restrictions, little improvements were made.

Many of the monetary increases will not take effect until July 1, 2010; other key elements of the Award came into place on January 1.

Growcom's Industrial Relations Manager, Donna Mogg was quoted as saying "...it will take some time for employers to understand the new rules, introduce new systems, such as payroll systems and begin implementing these new provisions".

Ms Mogg, who worked closely with the Horticulture Industry's peak body, the Horticulture Australia Council (HAC) to lobby for a fairer and more flexible system added "...in addition to contending

with the new Award, horticulture employers will also face serious workplace audits to be undertaken by the Fair Work Ombudsman during April and May".

Partnerships and sole traders will be given one year to move to the new Award while federal employers (Pty Ltd and Ltd companies) must start serious changes by July 1.

Meetings are being run by the Fair Work Ombudsman, to educate growers about the changes. The Fair Work Ombudsman works with employees, employers, contractors and the community to promote harmonious, productive and cooperative workplaces.

Former Chief Executive Officer for HAC, Kris Newton said " ...the final disappointment came when the Deputy Prime Minister's Office announced there would be no assistance in funding the national rollout of HIA seminars for growers" which HAC were hoping to host across the country.

Ms Newton said: "The next best alternate for growers is to attend the seminars offered by the Fair Work Ombudsmen, which HAC assisted in organising."

The Federal Government's new Award modernisation process, of which the HIA is a result, was designed to deliver simple, flexible, and economically sustainable employment arrangements while not increasing costs for employers nor disadvantaging employees.

But Ms Newton said that given the Horticulture Industry was a 'price-taking market', increases in costs could not be passed onto customers and cost increases would directly translate to a reduction in profit for growers (many of whom estimate losses).

"For example, for a Queensland strawberry grower who was surveyed for our submission and who employs up to 700 people during peak harvest period, increases in casual rates will alone result in an increased wage bill of about \$92,568 during a three month period," she said.



## National spotlight on horticulture sector

**The Fair Work Ombudsman has announced details of the much awaited national education and awareness campaign for the horticulture sector.**

The campaign aims to educate employers about the new National Employment Standards (NES) and the *Horticultural Award 2010*.

It will be conducted in partnership with the Australian Workers' Union, National Farmers' Federation, Horticulture Australia Council and the Australian Industry Group.

In announcing the campaign, the Fair Work Ombudsman Group Manager of Field Operations, Bill Loizides, said a special 'Guide to the Horticulture Award 2010' has been developed to assist employers understand their obligations.

"The guide contains an overview of the award, wages rates and answers to common employment-related compliance questions," Mr Loizides said.

He added that the guide was one part of a suite of resources for horticulture employers to assist them to understand and comply with the new Award and the NES.

The resources include a self-audit checklist, fact sheets and a CD-Rom with a wide selection of information for employers. Seminars and educational visits will be held in some regions. Details of times, dates and venues can be found at [www.fairwork.gov.au/horticulture](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/horticulture)

Following a mail-out to 15,000 employers in the horticulture sector highlighting the availability of the guide and other materials, the Fair Work Ombudsman will randomly select up to 1000 employers nationally for audit in May and June. If you are one of the employers selected, you will receive a letter, visit or telephone call from a Fair Work Inspector outlining the requirements of the audit and notifying you of the records or documents you will need to produce.

***Following a mail-out to 15,000 employers in the horticulture sector highlighting the availability of the guide and other materials, the Fair Work Ombudsman will randomly select up to 1000 employers nationally for audit in May and June.***

If you are found not to be complying with your obligations you will be provided with further assistance and encouraged to rectify the matter voluntarily. Only if voluntarily compliance is not achieved or if a serious or wilful contravention of the law is uncovered will further compliance action be taken to ensure that the requirements of Commonwealth workplace laws are met.

Hard copies of the guide are available by calling the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94.

*Employers or employees seeking further information can also contact:*

- Australian Workers Union - [www.awu.net.au](http://www.awu.net.au)
- Australian Industry Group - [www.aigroup.com.au](http://www.aigroup.com.au)
- Horticulture Australia Council - [www.hac.org.au](http://www.hac.org.au)
- National Farmers Federation - [www.nff.org.au](http://www.nff.org.au)

VGA members with VFF affiliations can receive new Award information by contacting the VFF Industrial Relations and quoting their ID number.

## Pay rates

Up to and including June 30, 2010, existing rates and penalties continue to apply.

From July 1, 2010, transitional rates of pay and penalties contained in the Horticulture Award 2010 will take effect. Piecework rates may also be paid to employees in substitution for hourly rates of pay.

Table 1: Hours of work

Full-time and part-time employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 152 ordinary hours over a four week period.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unless an arrangement is in place, ordinary hours:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Shouldn't exceed eight hours per day (but cannot exceed 12 hours).</li> <li>&gt; Will be worked between 6am to 6pm Monday to Friday.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hours worked in excess of ordinary hours are deemed overtime.</li> </ul>
Shiftwork employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 152 ordinary hours over a four week period.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Shouldn't exceed eight hours per day (but cannot exceed 12 hours).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afternoon shift finishes between 6pm and midnight, night shift finishes between midnight and 8am.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hours worked in excess of ordinary hours are deemed overtime.</li> </ul>

*(For full details see clause 22 of the Horticulture Award 2010)*

### Breaks

- An unpaid meal break of between 30 minutes to one hour should be taken no later than after five hours of starting work (unless otherwise mutually agreed). Employees instructed to work during a meal break are entitled to an overtime rate of 200% until they are released for their meal break.
- Employees will be paid a rest break of 10 minutes each morning. An additional unpaid rest break may be mutually agreed.
- There should be a 10-hour break between finishing a shift and starting a shift the next day.

*(For full details see clause 23 of the Horticulture Award 2010)*

### Overtime

Up until July 1, 2010, the overtime provisions outlined in the relevant existing transitional instrument will continue to apply. From July 1, 2010 the overtime provisions in the Horticulture Award 2010 apply.

The overtime provisions in the Horticulture Award 2010 are:

- Full-time, part-time and shiftwork employees are entitled to an overtime rate of pay of 150%, except on a Sunday when the rate is 200%, subject to the following:

***Continued on Page 6 >***

## Pay rates

*Continued from Page 5 >*

- If employees are required to work on a Saturday and the majority of these employees elect to work on the Sunday instead, then the work performed on that Sunday will be paid at Saturday rates (150%)
- During harvest period, the first eight hours of overtime in a week may include five hours work on a Sunday at the rate of 150%, but all Sunday work in excess of the eighth overtime hour worked in the week, or in excess of five hours on a Sunday, will be paid at the rate of 200%.
- A minimum of three hours work must be paid on a Sunday.
- Employees may have time off instead of payment for overtime.

*(For full details see clause 24 of the Horticulture Award 2010)*

### Employment status

At the time of engagement you must inform each employee of the terms of their employment, in particular whether they are full-time, part-time or casual. You must also inform them of the ordinary hours of work and starting and finishing times, even if it is for short-term or seasonal employment.

### Types of Employment

Important! Under the Horticulture Award 2010, casual employees get paid no less than 1/38th of the minimum weekly rate of pay for an employee in the relevant minimum wage and classification in the Award for each hour worked, plus a casual loading of 25%.

*(For full details see clause 10 of the Horticulture Award 2010)*

## Horticulture Industry Business Sessions:

The Victorian Farmers Federation is holding a series of *Horticulture Industry Business Sessions* to provide growers with the information they need to make sound business decisions.

These sessions will give growers an opportunity to learn more about some of the most important issues currently impacting the Victorian horticulture industry. **All growers welcome!**

### Topics include:

- Horticulture Awards 2010—how it will affect your business
- Resolving disputes using the Horticulture Code of Conduct
- How immigration can help meet your labour needs
- Weather trends and the effects on your region
- Understanding your requirements under Chain of Responsibility

### Mildura

Tuesday 20th April 2010, 12.00–5.00pm  
 Mildura Settlers Club, 114–118 Eighth Ave, Mildura

### Swan Hill

Wednesday 21st April 2010, 12.00–5.00pm  
 Grain Shed, 2–8 King Street, Swan Hill

### Yarra Valley

Thursday 29th April 2010, 12.00–5.00pm  
 York on Lilydale, cnr York and Swansea Rds Mt Evelyn

### Shepparton

Tuesday 4th May 2010, 12.00–5.00pm  
 Shepparton Park Lake, 481 Wyndham St Shepparton

For more information or to register to attend please contact:  
 Georgina Livery on 03 9207 5572 or [glivery@vff.org.au](mailto:glivery@vff.org.au)

## What is piecework?

**Pieceworkers are generally paid on the basis of results achieved or components produced (for example a fruit picker paid on a rate per bucket of fruit picked).**

Under the Horticulture Award 2010, you may enter into an agreement to pay piecework rates with a full-time, part-time or casual employee. In this situation, you could pay the employee piece rates instead of the rate of pay that would otherwise apply to that employee.

### What can be agreed between an employer and employee?

The piecework rate agreed between the employer and the employee:

- Must enable the average competent employee to earn at least 15% more per hour than the minimum hourly rate prescribed in the Award for the relevant employment status and classification level.
  - Must be paid for all work performed in accordance with the piecework agreement.
  - Must be in writing and signed by the employee.
- However, a piecework employee is not guaranteed to earn the minimum ordinary time weekly or hourly wage in the Award relevant to their employment status and classification level, as the employee's earnings depend on their productivity.

Which conditions in the Horticulture Award 2010 do not apply to a piecework employee?

- Ordinary hours of work and rostering (clause 22).
- Overtime (clause 24).
- Meal allowance (clause 24.5).

### Remember!

If the pieceworker is full-time or part-time they will still receive the leave entitlements under the National Employment Standards.

### Case Study - Calculating Piecework Rates

Webber and Sons Orchards plan to enter into a piecework agreement with Fiona, an adult casual picker. The piecework rate for Fiona is calculated as follows:

Weekly wage rate level 1 <i>(see clause 14):</i>	\$543.90
Plus 25% casual loading:	\$135.98 (\$543.90 x 25%)
Plus 15% piecework loading:	\$81.59 (\$543.90 x 15%)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$761.47</b>
Daily wage rate:	\$152.29 (\$761.47 / 5)

The daily rate is then divided by the bin or kg rate per day that an average competent pieceworker can achieve to determine the piecework rate.

The rate for an average competent pieceworker may vary day-to-day depending upon variable things like weather conditions; ripening process; type of bin; type of picking (for example selective or stripping); size of trees/plants; density of trees/plants and other variable conditions. These different variables need to be factored into a piecework agreement. If the piecework rate is to be varied, it must be agreed with the employee and be in writing and signed by the employee.

*For full details see clause 15 of the Horticulture Award 2010)*

## Costing gross margins now made easier

A simple computer program has been developed to assist vegetable growers with making decisions about what to grow based on an analysis of potential income and likely operating costs. The grower-friendly tool is the key output of a project being conducted by Scholefield Robinson Horticultural Services Pty Ltd.

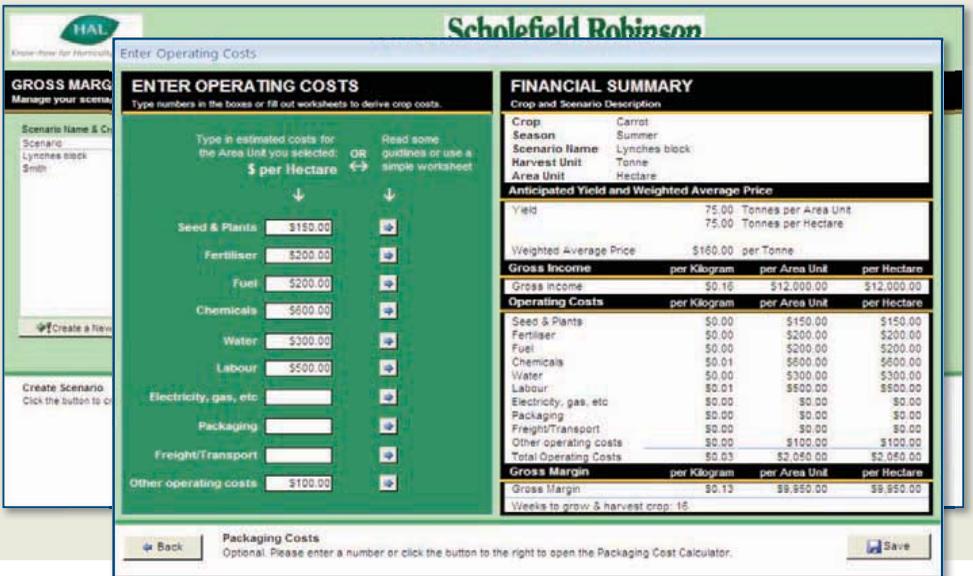
The program allows growers to enter figures such as estimated yields, prices and input costs in familiar units to arrive at a gross margin without having to convert everything into "per hectare" values. Users can decide on the level of accuracy, but it is envisaged that the main use of the tool will be to conduct relatively simple comparisons of different crop production "Scenarios".

The program can be downloaded from the AUSVEG web site under grower login (<http://www.ausveg.com.au>)

The program requires Microsoft Office Access 2007 to run but for users who do not have the full version of Access 2007 installed, you can download Microsoft Office Access 2007 Runtime free.

Alternatively, a copy of the program with or without Access 2007 Runtime can be ordered on CD-ROM by contacting Gerard Kelly, VegBiz Project Leader, NSW Department of Industry and Investment Dareton office, Vegetable Industry Centre Tel: (03) 5019 8406. ▼

Diagram 1: Operating costings for carrots entered into VegTool.



**Scholefield Robinson**

Enter Operating Costs

Type numbers in the boxes or fill out worksheets to derive crop costs.

**ENTER OPERATING COSTS**

Type in estimated costs for the Area Unit you selected: \$ per Hectare

Read some guidelines or use a simple worksheet

Seed & Plants: \$150.00

Fertilizer: \$200.00

Fuel: \$200.00

Chemicals: \$600.00

Water: \$300.00

Labour: \$500.00

Electricity, gas, etc:

Packaging:

Freight/Transport:

Other operating costs: \$100.00

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

Crop and Scenario Description

Crop: Carrot  
Season: Summer  
Scenario Name: Lynchies block  
Harvest Unit: Tonne  
Area Unit: Hectare

Anticipated Yield and Weighted Average Price

Yield: 75.00 Tonnes per Area Unit  
75.00 Tonnes per Hectare

Weighted Average Price: \$160.00 per Tonne

Gross Income	per Kilogram	per Area Unit	per Hectare
Gross income	\$0.16	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00
Operating Costs	per Kilogram	per Area Unit	per Hectare
Seed & Plants	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$150.00
Fertiliser	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
Fuel	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
Chemicals	\$0.01	\$600.00	\$600.00
Water	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Labour	\$0.01	\$500.00	\$500.00
Electricity, gas, etc	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Packaging	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Freight/Transport	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other operating costs	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$0.03</b>	<b>\$2,050.00</b>	<b>\$2,050.00</b>
<b>Gross Margin</b>	<b>per Kilogram</b>	<b>per Area Unit</b>	<b>per Hectare</b>
Gross Margin	\$0.13	\$9,950.00	\$9,950.00

Weeks to grow & harvest crop: 16

Back Packaging Costs Save

Optional: Please enter a number or click the button to the right to open the Packaging Cost Calculator.

## VGA working with Rural Finance to support growers

Collaborative work between the Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria and the Vegetable Growers' Association of Victoria (VGA Vic) is helping to keep growers in business.

VGA's Industry Development Officer for the east, Slobodan Vujovic is working closely with counsellors assisting growers who are either struggling from the lack of water, poor vegetable prices or last year's fires.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) is a service for farmers and small rural businesses in times of difficulty. Counsellors provide free, independent financial assessment for farming families faced with difficult decisions. The service is free and independent of financial institutions, welfare organisations

or the Government. VGA IDOs have also been working in cooperation with the RFCS.

One such case study was when a Counsellor assisted different growers in preparing applications to refinance their business loans with financial institutions. The growers were unsuccessful because the financiers didn't accept the data presented in the application related to the predicted crop yields.

However, IDO for the Eastern Region, Mr Vujovic was able to prepare the Counsellor an up-to-date cost of production table including forecasted yields for brassica crops that truly reflected Victoria's growing systems. Consequently, the growers were successful in their applications to obtain extra finance.

For more information about the RFCS Tel: 1800 686 175, Fax: (02) 6272 4414 or go to Website: [www.rfcs.gov.au](http://www.rfcs.gov.au) ▼

## executive officer's corner

### VFF subscription rise

Membership of the Victorian Farmers' Federation (VFF) Horticultural Group for 2010-2011 will be subject to an increase in subscriptions from \$275 to \$500 plus GST. This was a decision taken at the VFF Conference in 2009 and members will need to assess the membership benefits and savings that affect your business when membership renewal becomes due in June.

VGA Vic Grower Membership will increase to \$300 plus GST

### Local grower on National Advisory Committee

The National Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) for 2010 is represented by Roger Turner from Coolibah Herbs in south west Victoria. Mr Turner is also an Executive Member of VGA Vic. Two of Victoria's younger vegetable growers Richard Butler and Andrew Bulmer have been appointed to sub-committees of the IAC.

VGA Vic congratulates all three representatives for committing their expertise and time to Australia's vegetable industry.

### New HIA met with questions

The Federal Government's new Horticultural Industry Workplace Award 2010 became effective from January 1, 2010 with wage rates scheduled to be introduced from July 1, 2010 (see *Feature Page 4*). We encourage all vegetable growers to be aware of the new Award system and the introduction of the Fair Work Ombudsman who will be working with industry, employers and employees to ensure that the horticultural industry is complying with the new workplace laws.

Workshops are being organised through the VFF Horticultural Group during April and venue details can be obtained from VGA Vic office or seen on page 6.

### Market suffers hail damage

Vegetable Growers who have a trading stand at the Melbourne Markets have been subjected not only to slower sales demands for vegetables but also the hail storm damage which caused holes in the skylights of the roof over the main trading area. VGA Vic has maintained contact with the Melbourne Market Authority and is assured that the replacement skylights will be installed as quickly as materials become available.

### Database update

Data base records for Victorian vegetable growers are being reviewed currently as information listed can be out of date.

Communication is vital for our industry and all vegetable growers are invited to update their contact details especially mobile, email and fax numbers. This is part of our IDO service and Katie Fisher, Ken Orr and Slobodan Vujovic will be investigating the data base records over the next three months.

Your cooperation in advising any changes would be appreciated.



### Activities for 2010 for your interest and participation

May 27 to 30	<b>National Vegetable Industry Conference</b> at Conrad Jupiters Hotel Gold Coast QLD. More details from AUSVEG Tel: (03) 9544 8098.
June 9 to 12	<b>PMA Fresh Connections Conference</b> at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. More details Fresh Event Conference Managers Tel: (03) 9320 8673 or go to <a href="http://www.freshevent.com.au">www.freshevent.com.au</a>
August 6	<b>Vegetable Growers Annual Golf Day</b> at Lang Lang Golf Club South Gippsland Highway, Nyora. More details VGA Vic Tel: (03) 9687 4707.
October 15	<b>VGA Vic. Annual General Meeting and Dinner</b> scheduled for the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Spencer Street Melbourne. Commencing at 4pm. More details VGA Vic Tel: (03) 9687 4707.

Keep Smiling,  
Tony Imeson

## VGA Vic. proudly recognises our industry supporters:

