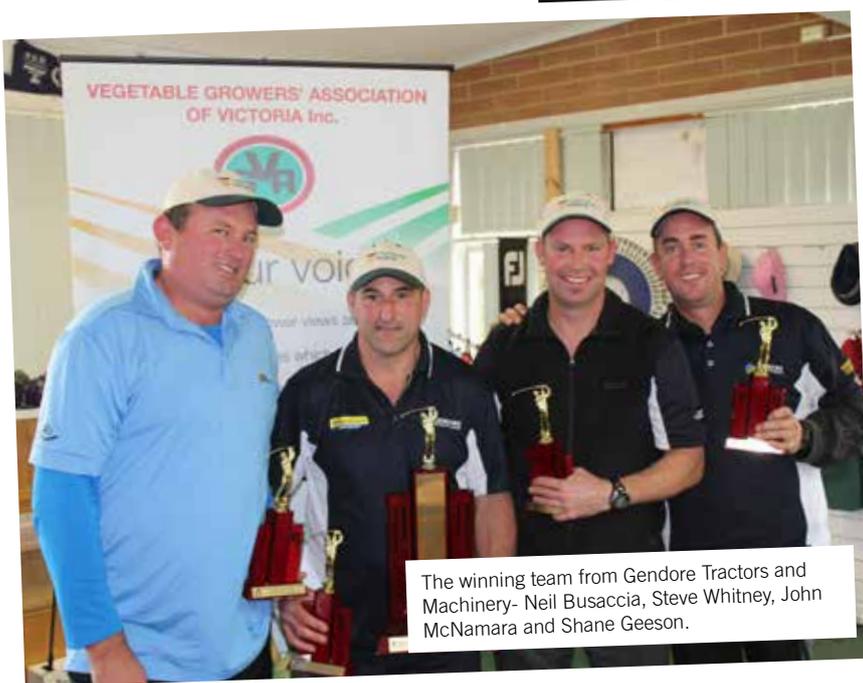
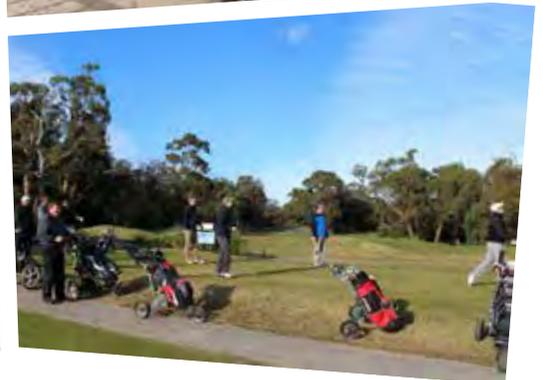


VEGETABLE GROWERS 2013 GOLF DAY AT LANG LANG



The winning team from Gendore Tractors and Machinery- Neil Busaccia, Steve Whitney, John McNamara and Shane Geeson.



A bright and sunny August morning saw 80 golfers assemble for the Annual Vegetable Growers' Golf Day held at Lang Lang Golf Club on the South Gippsland Highway in Nyora, Victoria.

The Ambrose Competition was proudly sponsored by Melbourne Market Authority, with joint sponsors E E Muir & Sons and South East Organic Fertilizers.

The 18-hole competition prizes were generously donated by Vegetable Industry Associates, with the President's Perpetual Trophy sponsored by Gazzola Farms and won by the team from Gendore Tractors and Machinery. The team from AMCOR received the runners-up prizes donated by Gendore Tractors and Machinery.

Robert Walker achieved the prize for 'Longest Drive No 1 hole'

donated by Prime Plastic Bags, and Shane Geeson achieved the prize for 'Longest Drive No 10' hole donated by Terranova Seeds.

For the other awards: Malcolm Allchin won the prize for 'Nearest the Pin at hole 5' donated by Berwick Insurance Group; Gus Speirings took the prize for 'Nearest the Pin at hole No 9' donated by Polyfoam Australia; Robert Wood scooped the prize for 'Nearest the Pin at hole No12' donated by QBE Insurance; and the prize for 'Nearest the Pin at hole No 15' donated by Polyfoam Australia was won by Joe Kelly.

The prize for 'Worst Team Score' donated by Bejo Seeds was taken out by QBE Insurance.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hi Everyone,

The past month has been full of meetings and conferences, as well as discussions with fellow growers, industry people, government ministers and public servants. There's certainly different opinions between government and growers about where our industry is now and into the future, and sadly they're miles apart.

The first and foremost question that is addressed to me by growers is: "Is there any future in this industry?" - no-one can see any light at the end of the tunnel. Most vegetable growers in Victoria are either third or fourth generation growers and that's about 100 years or more of continuously growing clean, green, affordable veggies for consumers within Victoria and Australia-wide. You don't achieve that without being very smart, efficient, knowledgeable, dedicated and forward thinking, with the ability to adapt to continuous change in growing and selling methods. Today, survival is the biggest challenge and fear for us all.

The pride, sense of achievement and ability

to grow sees each farming enterprise create a bond between family members that is second to none. Sadly, outside this great industry that employs thousands directly and thousands more indirectly, we get very little, if any, recognition for producing, continuously 52 weeks of each year, the best and healthiest vegetables in the world.

We have no say in extreme increases to farm input costs making survival near impossible. So many of us now face these decisions already and for others it will be sooner than you think. These decisions will be very hard to make. Do we stop now or keep going? Before you answer, you should get professional help to guide you on which way to go forward. Normally, I say gut feeling is the right one.

It's interesting in these tough times to listen to growers discuss how they are changing their business directions; some towards home selling, and others selecting export opportunities, changing crops or value added products. To survive in a business more than 100-years-old you have to be optimistic, have a passion for what you do and be adaptable to change direction and seek opportunities in different ways. That's why we are the best at what we do; congratulations everybody. I hope we can continue to grow our businesses, survive and enjoy our great profession as vegetable growers.

Think carefully in the future with respect to how much you plant; being over supplied with produce continuously for 52 weeks of the year and being price takers results in low returns. We can't make improvements and survive without adequate returns that are less than the cost of supply. There's an old saying, 'Better to measure twice and cut once'!

My final advice is to the decision makers of our industry, albeit Federal or State Government, to remember that if they don't look after the growers of today then there will be no growers of tomorrow. What will the

consumers eat then? Imported produce will not provide the same quantity and quality.

In late August AUSVEG officially opened its newer larger offices situated in Camberwell. It was a great evening talking to growers, industry people and politicians representing the Victorian and Federal Governments. Sadly, John Brent announced his retirement as Chairman of AUSVEG after five years at the helm. To John I say 'Well done!', over that period there have been many improvements to AUSVEG, making it what it is today - the peak body of Australia's vegetable industry. John's leadership ability has been outstanding within AUSVEG.

Robyn and I were recently invited to the Young Leaders' Group Dinner in Melbourne, which is a vegetable levy payers' project. The evening was very successful; and we learnt about how young industry people can improve their leadership skills in communication. This will improve the industry status in the future. Talking to young growers and learning about their hopes to make careers within this great industry certainly keeps me enthusiastic about what this industry can achieve in the future.

The Epping Market saga continues. There are still plenty of issues to finalise before we even get relocated there. Even though I am the Chairman of the Growers Advisory Committee and despite meetings with the State Department of SDBI and three meetings with the Ministers, there are still no written responses to our questions. We provide them with solutions but get knocked back each time because they conflict with their agenda. 'Their way or no way!' Is this what you call consultation?

Sincerely,

David Wallace

President

For Executive Officer's corner

See page 8

Welcome to new 2013-2014 Vegetable Grower Members:

Azemi Bros, V & A Liangos, Len Mollica, M & G Pivato, Rosengal Victoria and Verduci Enterprises.

Welcome to new 2013-2014 Industry Associate Member:

Alltech Crop Science.

Vegetable Growers'
Association of Victoria Inc.



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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. The information provided should not be interpreted as advice or a recommendation of any kind. VGA Vic. and its officers disclaim all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from relying on any information in this publication.

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GOLF DAY AT LANG LANG CONTINUED...



A delicious hot lunch was served by the ladies at the Lang Lang Golf Club Kitchen.

Following the lunch and Ambrose Competition Presentations, raffle tickets in support of the Royal Children's Hospital Ladies Auxiliary were circulated around the room. The draw was conducted by Kath Walker, President of the Waverley Ladies Auxiliary, with a range of 28 gifts kindly donated by Bejo Seeds, QBE Insurance, Rabobank, Rodpak, SE Organic Fertilizers, Visy and WFI.

In the absence of VGA Vic President David Wallace, who was engaged in a meeting with the Minister for Major Projects in Melbourne, Executive Officer Tony Imeson thanked Sponsors and Industry Associates for donating prizes and raffle gifts, the Lang Lang Golf Club, and everyone in attendance for their support.

Special reference and thanks were extended to VGA Vic Life Member Jack Walker for his continued support of this event.

Although some golfers encountered rain towards the end of the competition, the general feeling was that this had been yet another successful day for the Victorian vegetable industry.



APEN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013



Lunchtime – Horticulture group field walk.



The VGA's Executive Manager, Helena Whitman, was fortunate enough to obtain a HAL scholarship to attend the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN) Conference held at Lincoln University in New Zealand during August.

The Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) is a professional organisation for extension workers and those interested in extension. APEN members are involved in community and rural development, adult education, communication, industry collaboration, industry development, industry services and other related fields.

The Australasia Pacific Extension Conference was held at Surfers Paradise in Queensland in October 1993. At the breakfast meeting 120 extension practitioners from around Australia and surrounding regions supported the establishment of an extension network; APEN was born!

Conference delegates and topics represented all sectors of agriculture with attendees from as far away as Canada and South Africa, and several international key speakers.

Although most of the presentations were either dairy or grains oriented, the examples given and the lessons to be learned applied equally to all industries and people involved in extension. The positive attitude reflected the fact that we all work with growers in some capacity, be it extension or facilitation, with the messages fostering cooperation and communication.

The highlight of the Conference was the final presentation by Prof Gregorio Billikopf, which dealt with staff selection and conflict resolution, and although last on the program, the Professor had us all wanting more. His methods could be easily applied across all sectors by all managers or owners of businesses.

Grower networks driven by growers and their influence on and ownership of research in the dairy, grains and sheep meat industries were great examples of grower lead initiatives, however, these industries have the advantage of either single desk marketing or processing behind them, so they are not competitive in nature. Fragmentation within our industry, with so many commodities and individuals competing against each other, makes this a difficult task for our growers.

The presentation by Sue Pickering, Senior Business Manager



Walnut Grove field walk.



APEN Conference delegates.

for Horticulture NZ, outlined their strategy to grow the industry 60 per cent by 2020. To achieve this, industry has to make significant changes and a fundamental transformation of both attitude and behaviour by individuals and organisations. Much of this will be achieved by fostering young growers through Leadership and Young Grower of the Year programs. The fact that participants of the leadership program competed for the title of Young Grower of the Year gave the title much more credence.

Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria Inc.

Notice to all Members and Associates of the
2013 Annual General Meeting
to be held in the Bridge Room

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

Spencer Street Melbourne

FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013

Registration from 4.00pm.
AGM commences at 4.30pm.

Industry presentations will follow the AGM
Pre-dinner drinks from 6.30pm
Dinner at 7.00pm with Guest Speaker Pam Hawkes.

Registration, Executive and Officer Bearers Nomination, Proxy Forms
and Business Agenda available from VGA Vic Office.



WFI, proud alliance partner of VGA Victoria.

WFI is a proud alliance partner of the Vegetable Growers Association Victoria (VGA). Like the VGA, we have a very broad reach across the state with over 35 Area Managers located throughout Victoria. Unlike a number of our competitors, we prefer to deal direct with our clients face to face. When you deal with WFI, you deal with a person, not just a voice on the other end of the telephone.

Why not call us for a quote?

To find out more about WFI's products, request a quote, or to contact your local Area Manager, simply visit our website at wfi.com.au or call **1300 934 934**.

Good people to know.



To see if our products are right for you, always consider the PDS from the product issuer, WFI (ABN 24 000 036 279 AFSL 241461). If you take out a policy with WFI, VGA receives a commission from WFI of between 5% and 7.5% of the value of the premium payment (excluding taxes and charges).



STABILISED NITROGEN FOR VEGETABLE CROPS

A two-year study has shown that switching to Nitrophoska® with ENTEC® could reduce nitrogen losses and improve nitrogen use efficiency.

Switching to stabilised fertilisers offers a win-win situation for vegetable growers and the environment.

Field research led by Dr Ian Porter from the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries has shown that switching to Nitrophoska® + ENTEC® could improve nitrogen use efficiency and crop yields, as well as reducing Nitrogen losses to the environment.

The two-year study into stabilised fertilisers focused on lettuce and broccoli crops at Werribee and Boneo in 2011 and 2012.

Dr Porter said stabilised fertiliser provided some outstanding results in the trials.

ENTECC® stabilises the ammonium nitrogen in Nitrophoska® for a number of weeks after application, delaying the conversion to nitrate which is readily lost to the environment.

“In the first year of the trial, there were significant reductions in nitrous oxide emissions where stabilised fertiliser was used as the base fertiliser in broccoli at Werribee, particularly during the first two weeks after application,” Dr Porter said.

He added that yield increases were also seen in both years of the trial in broccoli crops. “Using stabilised fertiliser provided yield increases of up to 59% at Boneo in 2012,” he said.

The results also suggested that using stabilised fertiliser may give growers the opportunity to leave out one of their usual calcium nitrate side dressing applications early in the life of the crop.

“In the 2011 broccoli crop at Werribee, yields did not increase where the stabilised fertiliser base treatment was followed by a calcium nitrate side dress application,” said Dr Porter.

“This suggests that enough nitrogen was still available from the base application and the side dressing was unnecessary.”

The study suggests that if using stabilised fertilisers means one of the calcium nitrate side dressings may not be needed, this has the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of farms in Victoria by reducing the number of fertiliser applications and the amount of fuel used. This also saved labour costs and reduced waste in fertiliser use.

Dr Porter said further research was needed to demonstrate additional advantages of stabilised fertiliser treatments and to improve their profitability.

For more information see: Horticulture Australia Limited’s report, ‘Carbon and Sustainability, a demonstration on vegetable properties across Australia’, part of the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry’s Climate Change Research Program.

ENTECC® and Nitrophoska® are registered trademarks of EuroChem Agro GmbH. Incitec Pivot Fertilisers is licensed to distribute ENTECC® in Australia.



Left - without fertiliser, middle - Nitrophoska® only, right - Nitrophoska® stabilised with ENTECC®.

VG09086 - Evaluation of vegetable washing chemicals

A recent project completed by Dr Robert Premier evaluated a number of sanitising chemicals and compared them in terms of efficacy, ease-of-use, cost and effects on the postharvest shelf life of leafy vegetables.

Part of the requirements of a good on-farm QA plan is the sanitary washing of vegetables, especially leafy vegetables, in water containing a sanitiser chemical. This sanitation step will reduce the levels of bacteria, including any contaminating human pathogens, and prevent cross contamination of produce during the washing stage.

The three main reasons for washing produce are:

- To remove dirt and dust so that they can be presented to the consumer in a visually appealing manner;
- Washing with sanitisers for postharvest treatment purposes so that postharvest plant diseases can be kept under control and vegetable shelf life is increased; and
- Washing with sanitisers for food safety purposes so that human pathogens that may be present on the surface of vegetables are not passed on to consumers and to prevent cross contamination of produce during the washing stage.

The latter purpose is becoming more and more important as supermarkets, wholesalers and processors are pushing food safety down the line of supply to growers.

In Australia there are many sanitising chemicals available to growers, however, growers do not have much independent information available regarding these chemicals. This project has evaluated a number of sanitising chemicals and compared them in terms of efficacy, ease of use, cost and effects on the postharvest shelf life of leafy vegetables.

The aim of the project was to compare the efficacy of sanitising chemicals in reducing both spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms on vegetables, particularly leafy vegetables. Leafy vegetables are often consumed uncooked and hence the way that they are washed is critical in preventing food safety incidents at point of consumption. The comparison between sanitisers was carried out in a realistic commercial setting, using equipment already present on farm. The vegetables used in the testing were part of a normal harvest on that same farm.

The project studied:

- The efficacy of peroxyacetic acid and acetic acid sanitisers;
- The efficacy of chlorine and chlorobromo sanitisers;
- The efficacy of organic sanitisers derived from natural material;
- The efficacy of new and emerging chemical free sanitiser technology; and
- The shelf life of leafy vegetables after treatment with a number of sanitisers.

The results show that chlorine, as used currently by growers, is still an efficient way to achieve the aims of the sanitation step. Growers who produce leafy vegetables that are sold as pre-washed and ready to eat should consider using peroxyacetic acid based sanitisers. These sanitisers are, however, considerably more expensive and may contribute to a lower shelf life of the product.

Washing vegetables in water containing 100 ppm of chlorine remains the most suitable system available to growers that wash on-farm at the moment. Chlorine has advantages in terms of efficacy, cost effectiveness and ease of handling. This is closely followed by chlorobromo sanitisers, which are just as effective but have a slightly

higher cost.

Growers who supply the organic market should consider an organic based sanitiser. Although the efficacy of these is not as good as chlorine, chlorobromo, or peroxyacetic acid sanitisers, they still have some level of efficacy and are better than acetic acid.

In these trials electrified oxidised water, an emerging technology, was shown to have superior efficacy to any of the other products tested. Results also showed that product washed with electrified oxidised water had a longer shelf life. This technology could become a very useful tool for the sanitary washing of vegetables at on-farm level in the near future. The process would fulfil a chemical free washing claim and also be user friendly for the grower. It can be easily adapted to an automatic system with record of efficacy available for review by auditors of on-farm QA systems.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S CORNER



Maintaining Membership Services at the Local Level

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA Vic) has been in existence for over 60 years, providing assistance and industry information to its Grower Members, supported by a range of industry suppliers in their role as Industry Associate Members.

Over the past 15 years funding has been obtained by way of grants from the State Government, National Vegetable Levy and

Horticulture Australia. This has allowed the engagement of field officers who have had face-to-face discussions with Victorian vegetable growers and resolved a multitude of issues on the farm.

Advances in technology have created opportunities for information to be relayed electronically to Victorian growers. This has resulted in a reduction in the provision of funding, and unfortunately VGA Vic is no longer in a financial position to employ and provide field officer services. Over the past 12 months a decline in horticultural services available from the State Department of Environment and Primary Industries has left vegetable growers with the only option for 'on the farm' advice being through commercial suppliers.

Through a national network, AUSVEG provides an excellent range of electronic communication services and publications to the vegetable and potato industry. It is imperative, however, that issues relevant to local areas are also addressed and that funding is made available to provide the necessary State support services.

It has been stated on numerous occasions that the value of the vegetable industry begins with growers at the farm gate. Growers themselves should be leading and representing the Victorian vegetable industry at State level. Victorian vegetable growers must maintain unity and support VGA Vic as their local organisation.

Challenging Overseas Competition

It is little wonder that growers who travel overseas return with the attitude that the labour content of producing vegetables is more expensive in

Australia than in overseas countries. How can we compete on export, import and domestic markets that are promoting a downward trend for farm gate prices?

It therefore makes economic sense for food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers to move offshore for fresh produce and ignore the Australian vegetable grower who is not price competitive and yet is providing a range of top quality vegetables using the best food safety practices in the world.

Recent deputations by AUSVEG to our Asian neighbours will hopefully showcase our vegetables and be successful in opening an export market to all Victorian vegetable growers.

Protecting your Property

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA Vic) has held a long and proud alliance with WFI and have been working together to serve the Victorian vegetable industry. It is through this relationship that WFI offers VGA Vic members competitive and flexible quotes on their insurance. In return VGA Vic receives a commission through client referrals which benefits the organisation without impacting on a member's premium. When discussing insurance requirements with your WFI representative please mention that you support VGA Vic.

Keep Smiling,

Tony Imeson

Remember VGA Vic is YOUR voice of the Victorian vegetable industry and needs your support. Should you require more information about vegetable industry services available to you, please contact :

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Tony Imeson, Executive Officer.
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Email: tony.i@vgavic.org.au.

VGA Vic. proudly recognises our industry supporters:

