



## Australian diva backs new fruit and veg campaign

**Victoria's fruit and vegetable industry has a new ambassador - one of Australia's most popular female singers, Kate Ceberano.**

Last month, Ms Ceberano lent a helping hand to launch a simple but powerful campaign encouraging all Victorians to "Just Add Fruit & Veg" to their favourite meals as a way to increase consumption based on the recommended daily amounts.

The Breakfast stage of the campaign was launched at La Manna Fresh fruit and vegetable retailer in Sydney Road, Brunswick.

The Campaign funded by the Victorian Government's 'Go for your life' strategy and launched also by the Parliamentary Secretary for Human Services, Telmo Languiller, is a unique partnership between the Heart Foundation and the Melbourne Market Authority (MMA).

Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria's executive officer, Tony Imeson said any local consumer promotion of this style was supported by Vegetable Growers, especially when national or state promotional funding was not available through the Federal vegetable levy collection system.

Mr Imeson said the Victorian Industry required on-going funding support from the State Government and welcomed the "Just Add Fruit & Veg" campaign as a means to improve the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

The Campaign has four stages, each focusing on a particular meal - breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks - and offers simple ideas and tips that are easy to remember each time a meal or snack is being prepared.

Heart Foundation Victoria chief executive officer, Kathy Bell said Victorians were not meeting the recommended daily intake of two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables and that was why the campaign was so important.

MMA chief executive officer, Peter McLennan said fruit and vegetable retailers were excited about the campaign as it would encourage Victorians to come into their store and talk to them about interesting and fun ways to add fruit and vegetables to meals.

"Tip cards with the 'Just Add Fruit & Veg' messages will be available in all fruit and vegetable retailers and independent supermarkets across Victoria," Mr McLennan said.

"This is a terrific outcome ... and we are now developing a community guide to further assist in ways to encourage the local community to consume more fruit and vegetables." ▼

### Notice a new look!

The Vegetables Growers Association (VGA) of Victoria has achieved another major milestone in market positioning, with the launch of its new-look *Vegetables Victoria* newsletter.

VGA President, Luis Gazzola said the redesign of the Newsletter was a leap forward in achieving a consistent and focussed approach to the marketing of the VGA.

**"The changes reflect the VGA as a revitalised group, relevant and responsive to the needs of all Victorian vegetable growers," Mr Gazzola said.**

He said, at a time, when the whole agricultural environment was undergoing some sort of transformation, either in the marketing or production sector, the 'new look' Newsletter was a tool to help lead the industry into the future.

## president's report

Autumn has already arrived and we are still awaiting good rainfalls. Our last useful rain was early January and with all the rain in Queensland and Northern NSW we must surely be due for the autumn break.



Vegetables have been in plentiful supply for most of summer and the test case will be through autumn. Unless good rains are received the level of supply could change for the winter.

### Trading Hours

Once again, trading hours at Footscray Road have come under scrutiny with the Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) receiving input from the advisory committees. It is my understanding that the recommendations varied from a trading start of 2.30am to 6am. This resulted in the MMA making a decision for a 4am trading start effective from April 7, 2008.

The Growers Advisory Committee immediately objected to the MMA's decision and requested there be no changes to trading hours during the remainder of the tenancy at Footscray Road. It is the growers' opinion that buyers could not be serviced and supplied with fresh produce under the revised conditions of trading.

We have again appealed to the MMA to reconsider this unpopular decision and not make any changes to the current market trading hours.

### Epping 2001

In other Market Place news, a Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State Government and the Market Community has been signed for the relocation to the new site at Epping. A great deal of work is ahead for the organising committees in order to meet the proposed commencement in July 2011. The VEG hopes growers will nominate for these committees and not leave it to the same devoted few to represent the market community.

### Veg Expo 2009

On a positive note, it is encouraging to see the next AUSVEG National Vegetable Conference, scheduled for May 2009 in Melbourne, coinciding with the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee. The Vegetable Conference will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre in 2009 from May 5 and 6 with the Vegetable Expo at Werribee to follow from May 7 and 8.

This provides an excellent opportunity for growers and industry suppliers to combine and debate industry issues and to display the latest equipment and services. VEG Vic will be supporting this combined national week of vegetables and participate as a member of the Vegetable Expo Organising Committee.

### WA Celebrations

In the west, the Western Australian Vegetable Industry is celebrating its 60th Anniversary on May 31 at the Burswood International Hotel in Perth. This gala night will include the presentation of the National Vegetable Industry Awards.

I will be attending, representing VEG Victoria, and any interested grower wishing to attend should contact the office for registration and accommodation details.

*Luis Gazzola*

## executive officer's corner

### Melbourne Markets Relocation to Epping

Several committees are being formed to gain input from the market community and ensure that the transfer of trading from Footscray Road to Epping in 2011 will occur efficiently and effectively. The Market Design Committee currently holds weekly meetings and our vegetable grower representatives David Wallace and Vince Doria provide positive assistance. The layout of the growers' floor is very important in the construction of the market trading complex and we value your positive input by maintaining regular contact with David, Vince or the VEG Victoria office.



### Fresh Produce

Reports from overseas indicate that vegetables are in danger of vanishing from family meals because growers' production and harvesting costs are exceeding the actual sale-value received at the farm gate. Growers are looking for other alternatives and considering not planting the traditional range of vegetables. The current Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) enquiry (see story page 3) into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard grocery lines should receive a good response from the Australian Fruit and Vegetables Industry.

### Farmers Markets

The VEG Victoria office receives regular calls requesting members' support at farmers markets. Do commercial vegetable growers actually provide their fresh produce for sale at these regional weekend markets and what trading effect are farmers' markets having on the local fruit and vegetable shop sales that day? Members' feedback would be appreciated.

### AUSVEG

At the 2007 AUSVEG Annual General Meeting held in Melbourne in late January the board of directors was announced. Michael Badcock, from Tasmania, returned as Chairman and David Anderson from Western Australia was elected Vice Chairman while John Mundy from South Australia was voted in as Treasurer. Directors representing Victoria are Luis Gazzola (vegetables) and Des Jennings (potatoes).

### National Vegetable Expo 2009

The organising committee held its first meeting in March to commence planning for the National Vegetable Expo in May 2009. New faces for the committee are encouraged with nominations directed to the VEG Victoria office.

### Vegetable Growers Golf Day

The VEG Executive Committee has considered holding a vegetable growers' golf day at Lang Lang Golf Club. All members and industry associate members would be invited to participate, not only to play but also to support the vegetable industry with sponsorship prizes. Robert Walker, the Lang Lang Golf Captain, suggested a Friday event in July or August would be an ideal time of the year for vegetable growers to have a hit and finish the day off with a barbecue.

We look forward to some positive feed back over the next month in response to more detailed circulation.

*Tony Imerson*





## Watchdog vows rigorous grocery price inquiry

The nation's consumer watchdog, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), is reviewing all public submissions in its rigorous inquiry into grocery prices.

So far, the 'watchdog' has received more than 200 submissions and is now set to hold a series of hearings across the country.

In January, the Federal Government directed the ACCC to hold the inquiry.

"It will be a very rigorous inquiry indeed," ACCC chairman, Graeme Samuel told ABC Radio last month.

The process of cross-examining the submissions begins this month, he said.

"I have to say that they (submissions) contradict each other in many areas," he said. "We want to find out what's going on in the market."

In ordering the inquiry, the Federal Government stressed to consumers that while the inquiry into grocery prices would put greater competitive pressure on supermarkets – don't expect prices to fall.

The inquiry is to consider all aspects of the grocery industry's supply chain, including the nature of competition.

In making a submission, Australia's peak horticulture body, Horticulture Australia Council (HAC), stated in "...the past decade, the retail price of groceries in this country has consistently risen by more than the rate of inflation – significantly higher than any other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country."



*"In ordering the inquiry, the Federal Government stressed to consumers that while the inquiry into grocery prices would put greater competitive pressure on supermarkets - don't expect prices to fall."*

"We believe these elements are linked: market power has allowed the major retail chains such dominance that there is an effective duopoly operating in this country."

Meanwhile, the peak national organisation representing Australia's packaged food, drink and grocery products, the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) stated, in its public submission that "...in such a competitive market where prices are highly visible, consumers are well placed to take advantage of price differences and alternative product sources.

"Protection for consumers and participants in the supply chain in such

markets depends on the application of modern competition law.

"The AFGC is unaware of behaviour between trading partners which contravenes the provisions of the Trade Practices Act or for which amendments to the Act would improve the competitiveness of the system.

Therefore the AFGC concluded "...that a competitive food and grocery retail sector exists in Australia and operates to deliver competitive prices for the consumer."

The ACCC will provide its report to the Federal Government's Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs by July 31 2008. ▼

## Comprehensive Cover for you...and extra support for VGA



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The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria is an alliance partner of WFI. As such, the Association receives a small commission each time one of our members takes out or renews a policy with WFI. These extra funds help us to continue to represent and support vegetable growers, and the industry. With WFI you receive personal on-farm service from a local Area Manager. There are 16 WFI branches across Victoria, so you can rest assured that WFI is never far away.

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Tom and George Corrigan survey the achievements of 25 years.



## Our Pioneer Growers: Corrigan Brothers Braeside 1934 -1961

This amazing tale of hardship and perseverance was first told by Ken J. Stubbs (Farm Manager, VRS Frankston) in the 1961 Autumn edition of *Vegetable Growers Digest*, a Victorian Department of Agriculture publication. The Corrigan brothers proved invaluable to the State's vegetable research program, and their struggle was typical of many early vegetable growers.

On a hot February day in 1934, 19-year-old Tom Corrigan and his elder brother Ralph turned the first sods on the Braeside block, about 32 kilometres south-east of Melbourne, from which they hoped to earn a living. Gazing across some 35 acres (7.7 hectares) of flat, dry, couch choked sand, they could be forgiven if their thoughts then were despairing ones.

Their other brother, George, was to join them within months and it is a tribute to the perseverance and labours of all three that Corrigan Bros, today (1961) rank among the most efficient producers of high quality vegetables in Victoria.

Starting on their own after a few years experience working for a leading market gardener, their late father, a local business

man, assisted them with the purchase of land. With his encouragement, and help, in what spare time he had, he proved a tower of strength in their first hard years.

Possessing only a four wheeled wagon and a pair of horses they turned over 12 acres (2.6ha) in the first year with a Gibbins two-furrow disc plough, hired out for five shillings an acre. They borrowed a single furrow Oliver plough, a set of harrows and a spring toothed cultivator.

Headlands were shovelled up with old coal shovels and an ancient wattle and daub homestead housed their implements and horses.

*“Possessing only a four wheeled wagon and a pair of horses they turned over 12 acres (2.6ha) in the first year with a Gibbins two-furrow disc plough, hired out for five shillings an acre.”*

Four acres of the original 12 fell victim to the couch which they found was 10 inches thick in parts and sometimes wore out three points of the Oliver in a day.

Some wise old timers shook their heads and said they would never make a go on that land, others had attempted to grow chicory in it for three years and failed.

The first crop produced 1½ acres of Irish Cabbage and could not be sold, one load in memory netted £2.10 (\$4.50).

Eight acres of potatoes following, sold better, and they purchased an old 1924 model Chev. truck, a second hand scoop, harrows, spring toothed cultivator and dutch hoes.

The only water on the property was brackish water from a well beside the old homestead they “batched” in. Fresh water for drinking and washing had to be carted two miles.

In the floods of November 1935, they had too much water, and despite strenuous sandbagging of the main drain, they, like many others, lost most of their spring crops.

By the end of the second year the homestead was fitted with spouting to a tank and windlass installed over the well.

With the well water, they successfully grew two acres of parsnips and an acre of carrots by walking down the rows, a watering can in each hand.

For three years they struggled: fences had to be erected; windbreaks planted; five acres was still uncleared and lack of water limited their crops. They worked from daylight to dark.

With the coming of Board of Works water in 1938, two crops a year were possible. For the first time the Corrigan





brothers began to make progress and they employed two men.

Then came the war and Tom tried to carry on with an elderly labourer when Ralph, George and their two men went into the army. Their property slipped back.

Later, when released from the army to grow vegetables under government contract, their progress continued.

*"By the end of the second year the homestead was fitted with spouting to a tank and windlass installed over the well."*

During these years, they worked five horses and employed eight men, but much of the capital gain was ploughed back in sheds, underground drains and irrigation systems. All three brothers had married by this time and had built homes.

After the war they bought their first tractor, a second-hand International A. Another seven acres were brought into production. They were then working 42 acres.

By 1961 water was piped to every corner of the property and 24,000 agricultural drain pipes had been laid in the preceding fifteen years. Four tractors had replaced the horses.

General layout of blocks, care and maintenance of windbreak hedges and fences, commonsense manure and fertilizer use and regular pest and disease control, all reflect their efficiency in a minimum of crop failures.

It was during the war years that Agricultural Department officers were first associated with the Corrigan Brothers with vegetable variety trials.

This association has continued and their co-operation and assistance has proved invaluable to our vegetable research program as has the assistance of many other vegetable growers in the metropolitan and country areas.

Vegetable variety trials, fertilizer and weed control trials have been conducted on the Corrigan Bros property for many years. At present, chemical weed control trials are in progress on a variety of vegetables. ▼

*Ken J. Stubbs (1961)*



*Above: The original Corrigan Homestead at Braeside.  
Below: Looking across a portion of the garden.*



## VegSkills Program set to maximise business profits

**In a first for Australia's vegetable industry, AUSVEG in partnership with Response Learning is designing a skills program to help businesses maximise their potential.**

The program will be launched in Melbourne this July and has been specifically designed for vegetable growers to adapt practical learning to the varying dimensions of their environment.

The course will focus on developing business, finance and marketing knowledge and skills through the use of practical projects.

Running from July to August in Melbourne, there will be three, two-day workshops, followed by distance learning. The facilitators are highly

experienced professionals with a wealth of knowledge to guide participants.

Growers will learn:

1. How to write and implement a business plan.
2. How to better plan and manage business finances.
3. Marketing your business for better growth.

The program can lead to the Certificate IV in Small Business Management. To achieve the qualification, growers must complete the assessments which will be work-related and can also be practically applied to their business.

The program will be held from July 4 and 5, July 18 and 19 and August 22 and 23. The cost is yet to be finalized and a funding subsidy is being sought. ▼

For more details or to apply to the program visit [www.responseaust.com.au](http://www.responseaust.com.au). Alternately, call Wendy Hall at Response Learning on (07) 3357 4400 or 0418 491 595



# Drip or Sprinkler Irrigation?



*Crop performance and the cost/benefits of drip irrigation were compared with a standard sprinkler system at a recent Werribee field day.*

**A Werribee South project has tested the claim that drip irrigation can dramatically reduce water usage without reducing product quality or yield and even improve crop uniformity.**



*Plant roots exploited water in the cultivated top 40cm of the soil.*

The voluntary contribution Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL)-funded project, also compared the economics of drip and spray irrigation.

The trial established an effective and efficient drip irrigation system for growing lettuce on the heavy Werribee clays. It is expected that the results of the economic analysis will detail the cost-benefits of drip and sprinkler irrigation systems and other doubts which are limiting the uptake of drip irrigation of vegetable crops in southern Victoria.

## The trial

Arris, a private consulting firm, contracted the technical irrigation support of NETAFIM Australia and combined their skills with the experience of the host grower, Anthony Agosta, to produce lettuce on a half hectare experimental site during spring (Crop 1) and summer (Crop 2).

The grower had been working both the sprinkler and drip systems with ARRIS and NETAFIM staff. Many valuable lessons about irrigating lettuce were learnt and the experience was applied to the second crop planted on December 19.

Remembering that the summer planting (2007) was subject to great heat stress and

strong winds, there was no difference in marketable portions of the crops between spray and drip (30cm spacing).

Overhead sprinklers, however, were shown to be inefficient because of low uniformity in strong winds and also had to be run longer to water the driest areas of the crop.

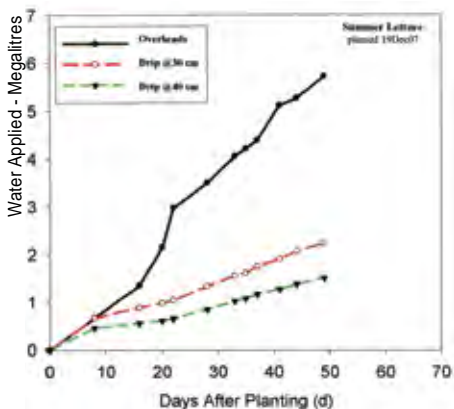
*“Remembering that the summer planting (2007) was subject to great heat stress and strong winds, there was no difference in marketable portions of the crops between spray and drip (30cm spacing).”*

The drip system didn't water the furrows or sprinkler lines (25% less area) but demanded close attention to soil moisture measurements as the soil surface remained visibly dry. Trials with both 30 and 40cm dripper spacing operating at 1 litre/hour consumed half the water and 70% of the fertiliser compared with the sprinkler system (*see graph*).

A full economic analysis of crop yield, water and fertiliser use, operational costs



Comparing A Drip & Sprinkler Irrigation System (MI)



Sprinklers used three-times more water than the drip system.

and the labour needed for the different irrigation methods is currently underway. The quality and yield of all three treatments were much the same at harvest with drip requiring far less inputs.

*“The drip system didn’t water the furrows or sprinkler lines (25% less area) but demanded close attention to soil moisture measurements as the soil surface remained visibly dry.”*

At a field day held in February, attendees saw the project’s results first-hand and were able to discuss with researchers the benefits of using drip irrigation on lettuce crops during summer. ▼

For more information contact:  
Daryl Stevens at Arris  
Tel: (03) 9421 1701 Mob: 0418 802 621



Inspecting water sensors located beneath the crop.

## CASE STUDY



## Drip irrigation promises dramatic savings

Despite the heavy La Niña rains across Northern Australia, the drought continues its stranglehold on Victorian agriculture.

The long-term climate outlook for southern Australia is grim. With drier springs and hotter summers, vegetable growers will need either access to good quality recycled water or to reduce their water-use.

Growers in northern Victorian irrigation districts have already made substantial gains by changing the design and scheduling of their irrigation systems. These improvements have reduced their demand for water and their businesses continue to operate in a tight water market.

*“Drip irrigation promises dramatic water savings with additional benefits such as limiting weed growth and time/fuel savings through fertigation.”*

Reduced water allocations at Bacchus Marsh are also driving growers to move away from overhead irrigation systems in order to stretch their water further.

Bacchus Marsh grower, Andrew Costler and local Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) irrigation officer, Julio Vargas are evaluating several drip irrigation options on the harvest quality of broccoli, cauliflower

and lettuce crops.

To ascertain the most cost-effective option, three different drip tape flow rates, (0.7, 1.0, and 1.6 litres per hour) have been set up with soil moisture monitored beneath each crop.

Drip irrigation promises dramatic water savings with additional benefits such as limiting weed growth and time/fuel savings through fertigation.

Many growers are unfamiliar with the demands of operating a drip system efficiently and are concerned about leaks, blockages, costs and the time needed to lay and retrieve the drip tube for each crop.

It is expected that this trial will help set research priorities for subsurface drip irrigation in southern Victoria and increase awareness of the benefits and limitations of irrigation techniques.

Local growers will also share in the knowledge already developed in other irrigated industries.

Andrew and Julio will present their findings on the costs, benefits and limitations of drip irrigation in local soil types at a field day after Easter. ▼

For more information please contact:  
Julio Vargas Mob: 0428 316 018 or  
julio.vargas@dpi.vic.gov.au



VicDPI irrigation officer, Julio Vargas

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## STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP

### Victoria issues permit for WFT control in lettuce

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Victoria has issued Permit No:18-S25A2b-2007-2 for the use of methomyl/LANNATE to control Western Flower Thrips (WFT) on field grown leafy and head lettuce. Under Victorian legislation, a permit is required for off-label use of a S7 chemical. The permit is valid from 3/03/08 to 28/02/09.

WFT can quickly develop resistance to insecticides. The rotation of products from different chemical groups will delay the development of chemical resistance in plant pests and conserve the effectiveness of existing products.

### New CD-ROM - maximising returns from water

A CD-ROM has been released which details the value of domestic, processing and export vegetable production in each state. The costs and benefits which follow a shift to more efficient irrigation systems are reported at farm level.

The bottom line:

- Growers are embracing water saving techniques in the face of severe drought.
- More growers are switching to drip irrigation and automated sprinkler systems to reduce water consumption.
- More accurate measures will enable improvement of water efficiency.

For more information contact Mark Hickey at NSW DPI  
Tel: (02) 6951 2523.

### Health checks for growers

Yarra Valley Community Health Service, DPI-Victoria and the Centre for Agriculture and Business-Yarra Valley are offering a free two-day workshop and health check to farming families. The program aims to address the health, well being and safety needs of farming families. The program includes blood tests, a personal health report and group sessions explaining how you can better manage stress, diet and lower the risk factors for cancer, heart attack and mental illness.

The workshop will be held on Tuesday 20 and Wednesday 21 May, with a follow-up next year. Places are limited so for more information contact Alison Brinson on Tel: (03) 9210 9308.

### Greens win over their fruity counterparts

An increased intake of green leafy vegetables, but not fruit, may reduce the risk of lung cancer by 50%, suggests a new study from Spain.

The study, completed by the Galician Public Foundation for Health Emergencies researchers and published in the journal *Nutrition*, found similar protection for an increased intake of potatoes, cabbage and turnip tops as well as lettuce.

"The protective effects of the vegetables were possibly due to the antioxidant content of the food, known to be a rich source of vitamins A and C, as well as flavonoids," the study found. The study adds to a rapidly expanding body of science linking an increased intake of vegetables to a reduced risk of certain cancers. ▼



Want to know more about the Victorian vegetable industry?  
Log on to [www.vgavic.org.au](http://www.vgavic.org.au)

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