



East Gippsland growers make pilgrimage to Werribee Expo

The National Vegetable Expo was held on 5 and 6 May in Werribee attracting more than 1000 visitors comprising industry representatives and growers from Victoria, interstate and New Zealand.

East Gippsland vegetable growers made their biannual pilgrimage to the Werribee Vegetable Expo this year as a group.

The bus tour was organised by our leading young grower Andrew Bulmer from Lindenow with the support of VGA IDO Slobodan Vujovic.

The tour was made possible by sponsorship from our vegetable seed industry partners: South Pacific Seeds; Rijk Zwaan; Lefroy Valley; Nunhems; Syngenta Seeds; Monsanto; Clause Pacific; Fairbanks Seeds; Terranova Seeds and Westranell Horticultural Solutions.

Departing Lindenow at 6:00am the bus made several zigzagging stops collecting tour participants along the way to their destination. After approximately a four-hour long bus drive participants arrived at the Expo ground.

VGA life member, Jack Walker, who was the Expo's roving reporter, announced the tour arrival and wished them a warm welcome. Upon arrival the majority of participants went straight to the seed display area.

VGA IDO Slobodan Vujovic later caught up with some growers on the tour. Malcolm Forsyth, a vegetable grower from Stratford, attended the Expo with his son. Mr Forsyth said that the Werribee Expo provided growers with a unique opportunity to view what the various seeds companies have to offer growers, all in a central location, which allowed growers to make informed and independent judgements as the products were demonstrated under the same conditions.

"We got to see some material on offer; new trends like miniature herbs," he said.

"The bus tour was an excellent idea. We came here as a group and we had the opportunity to talk to each other on the way back and discussed what we saw."

"Andrew Bulmer and VGA are to be congratulated for the tour," he said. Andrew Bulmer, the tour organiser and AUSVEG Young Grower of the Year

“The Werribee Expo provided growers with a unique opportunity to view what the various seeds companies have to offer growers, all in a central location...”

said that he was happy with the turnout, with 18 growers visiting the Expo, many of them experiencing it for the first time.

"Not just seed companies but the majority of our suppliers are at the Expo. There is an opportunity to see new products coming on to the market or just simply a chance to say hello," he said.

"Once more I would like to thank the VGA and our sponsors for supporting the East Gippsland veggie growers."

► **More coverage of the Werribee Expo on page 3**

President's report



Greetings to vegetable growers and industry associates.

The Victorian floods

In my summer report I wrote about the floods and of the many crop losses in our industry from all around eastern Australia. It has been heartbreaking for many farmers and some are still recovering. We believe that most are back in business, growing more vegetables than ever. Unfortunately, the markets are now oversupplied for most lines and consumers are buying less produce. Therefore, the demand from retailers has reduced and returns to growers have dropped.

Promoting fresh veggies

The industry must take this downturn seriously and provide funding to effectively promote fresh vegetables. I am a great believer in the need for an industry levy to fund the promotion message that "Fresh is Healthy." We grow and harvest the best fresh vegetables in the nation and should be promoting for the benefit of all Australians.

AUSVEG Convention

It was very pleasing to be part of the 2011 AUSVEG Convention held in Brisbane from 14-16 April and witness the large attendance of growers and industry supporters. Victoria was again successful with two industry award

winners. Our congratulations go to Deborah Corrigan and Andrew Bulmer, both members of VGA Vic.

Werribee Expo

As a member of the organising committee it was rewarding to be involved in a successful 2011 Vegetable Expo at Werribee. Our Chairman, Les Giroud, Technical Advisor, David Milburn and Coordinator, Claire Luppino, worked tirelessly on the ground plots and provided valuable assistance to seed companies and all exhibitors. Visitors from each State and New Zealand were presented with a fantastic display of vegetable varieties, together with exhibits showcasing industry equipment and technology. We look forward to continued support for 2013.

Market relocation

It is hoped that when this report goes to print that the State Government will have made a decision regarding the future of the Melbourne Markets. There is, in my opinion, an urgent need to establish a new Market User Group to work with the Market Authority and State Government to ensure that Melbourne Markets operate in conjunction with sellers and buyers.

Carbon tax

The introduction of a carbon tax will create an enormous cost burden on all Australians. Vegetables may have an exemption but the cost of production will escalate due to other increases in services and supplies. You can bet the odds are in favour of no increase at the farm gate for vegetables. How can we become more efficient on the farm to ensure a return for our labour? The industry must stand firm against the introduction of a carbon tax!

Support for IDOs

Helena and Slobodan are providing an excellent service to vegetable growers across Victoria. In some instances, this is done under trying conditions when visiting farms to relay industry information to vegetable growers. I would ask that you afford them

some of your valuable time at the farm and let them know of any industry issues.

Support from the Executive

The Executive Committee has met monthly and addressed industry concerns and hosted invited guests to be advised on a wide selection of industry developments and technologies.

The committee is elected each year at our AGM and I would recommend that all growers consider nominating to be members of this vegetable industry group.

Membership renewals

Renewals for existing members and invitations to non-members will be circulated in June for the 2011-2012 membership year for Growers, Industry Associates and General Associates.

I would ask that you seriously consider your support of the vegetable industry in Victoria and renew your membership or become a new member.

VGA Vic Golf Day

The annual golf day is scheduled for Friday 5 August, 2011 at the Lang Lang Golf Club, South Gippsland and I encourage all golfers and industry supporters to participate.

2011 AGM

Our AGM will be held on Friday 14 October, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Melbourne. I encourage all members to respond to the invitation to attend. I have held the President's position for the past six years and would be delighted to stand down. When you receive your nomination form, seriously consider how you can support your Association by putting your name forward for the position of President or Vice President or a member of the Executive Committee.

May God bless us with good health and happiness and may the government policy makers consult with us when it concerns our industry.

Yours sincerely,

Luis Gazzola

For Executive Officer's Corner

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2011 Werribee Expo a hit, as 2013 event confirmed

Helena Whitman – IDO Western Victoria and Slobodan Vujovic – IDO East

The weather was kind and attendance at the field days strong, with over 1,000 attendees turning out to sample a selection of industry information, machinery products, seed displays and first-hand demonstrations.

As always, the Expo also provided valuable information for growers, in the form of presentations by industry researchers and specialists, and in further positive news for the event, the Expo committee have now confirmed that 2013 at Werribee will go ahead.

The IDO program ran four information sessions during the Expo. Caroline Donald's presentation on soilborne diseases was well attended by growers. Ms Donald spoke about various options for the treatment of Sclerotinia, fertiliser practices and the use of biofumigation, crop rotation and green manures to improve soil health and productivity.

“ A number of local growers impressed by the event noted that the Expo was a one stop shop enabling growers to keep up with the latest products and farming trends... ”

Dr Liz Minchinton's presentation on White Blister gave some insight into various treatments and those that were showing the best results. Dr Minchinton also discussed an in-field spore detection kit her group was working toward developing.

Pam Strange's presentation asked "What's the weather doing?" Ms Strange detailed weather trends of the past century and also gave growers handy advice on how to read the Southern Oscillation Index and the Indian Ocean Dipole.

Nic Gowans presented on Precision Horticulture and suggested that,

although not widely used in the vegetable industry, there is a great opportunity for growers to become more efficient and increase productivity by embracing the concept.

Dianne Fullelove spoke about training practices that had been embraced by growers through the People Development Program. Ms Fullelove also spoke on the Leadership Program and opportunities for growers under the Nuffield Scholarship Scheme.

Andrew Sullivan presented on his current work looking at work injuries in the vegetable industry. Mr Sullivan has been working closely with several growers to identify where injuries occur during planting, picking and packing, in an effort to reduce the number of injuries and also the premiums being paid by growers.

Finally, Andrew White from AUSVEG provided a presentation on the vegetable industry's environmental program, EnviroVeg.

Feedback from attendees to the Expo was very positive across the two days. One NSW grower remarked that the Expo had allowed him the opportunity to discuss new varieties with seed companies one day and speak to machinery and irrigation specialists the next. A number of local growers impressed by the event noted that the Expo was a one stop shop enabling growers to keep up with the latest products and farming trends, while a group of young growers from New Zealand who made the trip to the Expo saw the seed displays as the highlight.

The New Zealand growers took the opportunity to check out the latest Australia-made machinery and spent most of their time walking amongst the local machinery and equipment displays.

Overall, the feedback from visitors, seed companies and trade exhibitors was that the biennial event was a key event in their calendar and that they were looking forward to 2013.



Victorian's recognised at the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention

**Helena Whitman – IDO Western Victoria and
Slobodan Vujovic – IDO East**

The 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence was held at Brisbane's Sebel-Citigate Hotel from 14 to 16 April. The Convention attracted close to 1000 delegates from all parts of Australia including a number of growers and industry representatives from Victoria.

The Convention was officially opened by AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent on Thursday 14 April. The following day saw growers visit the Brisbane Produce Markets for a breakfast, during which the Hon. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, and leader-designate of the LNP in Queensland, Campbell Newman, addressed delegates. Upon return to the Convention delegates heard a further address from Mr Abbott and Senator Barnaby Joyce, Leader of the Nationals in the Senate, who delivered the Convention's keynote address.

Over the following two days delegates heard presentations from researchers, industry representatives, policy makers and politicians from all major parties. The Great Debate on 'Water usage in the Murray Darling Basin' saw two passionate debaters, Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan and Dr Jennifer Marohasy, go head-to-head on the issue, moderated by veteran journalist Laurie Wilson.

The convention concluded with the Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner on Saturday night. There were 12 awards presented at this year's dinner, recognising excellence throughout the industry.



Pictured: Luis Gazzola, Peter Cochrane, Tony Imeson, Deborah Corrigan, Andrew Bulmer, David Wallace, Paul Gazzola, Gloria Gazzola.



[Above] Brent Dobson, Wayne Stockton, Andrew Bulmer, and Rick Butler, [Right] Murray Lynch, Narelle West and Dipper present the Women in Horticulture Award to Deborah Corrigan, [Below] Andrew Bulmer receives the Young Grower of the Year Award from John Gilmour, Daniel Maher and Ron Boswell, with Dipper, [Below Right] Callum Hann and The Hon Tony Abbott MP take in the sights at the trade show.



The winners, including two from Victoria, were as follows:

Women in Horticulture Award - Deborah Corrigan, VIC;

Young Grower of the Year Award - Andrew Bulmer, VIC;

Environmental Award - Rodney Emerick, QLD;

Innovative Marketing Award - Mitolo Group, SA;

Industry Impact Award - Rohan Prince, WA;

Rising Star of the Year Award - Tom Hunt, QLD;

Industry Recognition Award - Max McKenna, TAS;

Researcher of the Year Award - Denis Persley, QLD;

Productivity Partner - Peracto, TAS;

Grower of the Year Award - Sam Calameri, WA;

Chairman's Award - Jeff McSpedden, NSW; and

Lifetime Achievement Award - Kevin Clayton Greene, TAS

Deborah Corrigan is a worthy winner of the Women in Horticulture Award. Ms Corrigan, along with brothers Darren and Stephen, are the



industry and as such will have its own challenges. I know because I went through many of them myself, but despite the challenges there are some great opportunities out there for women,” she said.

Ms Corrigan suggested that there is a lack of information available for women regarding the industry opportunities that are out there and indicated that an R&D project to identify these opportunities would be useful.



Tony and Maureen Imeson (left) with David Wallace and Warwick Scherf. Gloria and Luis Gazzola.

When asked what it meant to be recognised by the industry for her efforts, Ms Corrigan replied: “It means a great deal to be recognised by the industry and other farmers. I’ve had to stand my ground over the years to be recognised as a ‘farmer’. It was very nice seeing the other industry people and especially fellow farmers being very pleased for me receiving the award.”

Ms Corrigan wasn’t the only Victorian to be recognised at the AUSVEG Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner, with fourth generation Victorian vegetable farmer, Andrew Bulmer named Young Grower of the Year.

At just 30, Mr Bulmer is an experienced Operational Manager in his family business, Bulmer Farm Fresh vegetables, which employs 40 staff in Lindenow, East Gippsland.

The business produces lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, sweet corn and spinach on 700 acres of fertile soil on the Lindenow flats alongside the Mitchell River. The business predominantly supplies the processing industry in Bairnsdale and the Sydney and Melbourne Markets.

Mr Bulmer joined the family business after graduating from secondary school and hasn’t looked back since. He recently completed an industry leadership course and attended the AUSVEG Grower Study Tour to New Zealand.

“ I do understand that it is still a very male dominated or perceived industry and as such will have its own challenges. I know because I went through many of them myself, but despite the challenges there are some great opportunities out there for women. ”

“To be a successful vegetable grower you have to love what you do, work hard and be an optimist,” Mr Bulmer said.

In addition to working in the family business, Mr Bulmer is an active member of the Gippsland vegetable industry and the national industry’s Leadership Advisory Group, as well as the Vice President of the local football and netball clubs.

Over the past two years, Bulmer’s company has made substantial investments in water infrastructure, expanded its production area from 250 to 700 acres, and modernised its processing, packing and storage facilities.

“Since I started to be active in the industry I’ve gained a lot of knowledge, met many successful industry people and growers from different parts of Australia. I’ve become more confident and better able to use the learning experience to make positive changes to my family’s business.”

“I’d like to encourage others, especially young vegetable growers, to get out there and give to their industry and local community; great rewards and personal satisfaction will follow.”

third generation to carry on their 80-year-old family business.

The Corrigan’s currently have over 140 hectares under production in the Clyde area. The business produces: Celery; Baby Cos; Leeks; Celeriac; Silverbeet; Pak Choy and Salad Onions. Over the past few years the business has grown substantially resulting in the purchase of another farm.

The business prides itself on producing consistent, quality, fresh and safe food with a strong focus on innovation and development of new produce lines and value adding. It was one of the first farms to embrace quality assurance and the industry’s environmental program, EnviroVeg.

Although not currently involved in any specific women’s groups, Ms Corrigan said: “I believe that there are many women who have significant involvement in farming who, for a variety of reasons, stay in the background. I would like to see more women become involved in this industry.”

“Having a balance of men and women works very well – it does for my farm. I do understand that it is still a very male dominated or perceived



Recently, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, in conjunction with VGA IDO East Slobodan Vujovic, organised a field day for vegetable growers.

The field day focused on carbon and nitrogen and how they can be managed to increase profits and sustainability on farms. The event at Russell Lamattina's Farm (Lamattina Group) at Boneo was held on Thursday 26 May, 2011.

Program leader Dr Ian Porter opened the field day and presented background information on the project and thanked our host Russell Lamattina and the DAFF Climate Change Research Program for funding the project.

The group then followed Dr Porter through a field tour of long-term trials in broccoli crops grown with different manures, fertilisers and pesticide inputs. Tom Schreurs, was assisting Dr Porter in the visual assessment of the trial. Mr Schreurs said there was a clear difference between treatments in plant frame and head size.

David Riches, DPI VIC Project Officer, demonstrated how the team measured nitrogen emissions into the atmosphere. By that time the rain



became more persistent forcing the crowd to go under cover.

The group then heard about a computer tool called 'C-Calc' that estimates the carbon contribution added to soil from rotations or organic amendments. The group also heard about stabilised nitrogen fertilisers – how they work and the advantages and disadvantages of using them.

Dr Porter said: "What you saw there on the field is the result of three-years of field work with a range of soil amendments with different

“ Slow release ammonium fertilisers increased broccoli yields by 15% above standard grower practice. Organic amendments also had positive effects, but due to the slower breakdown of these products, positive profits occur more slowly. ”

soil health impacts. Encouragingly, most of them resulted in a positive financial return for growers. Particularly, slow release ammonium fertilisers increased broccoli yields by 15% above standard grower practice. Organic amendments also had positive effects, but due to the slower breakdown of these products, positive profits occur more slowly.”

Andrew Fragapane and Rob Nave travelled from Werribee South to attend field day, and both said it was time well spent. Mr Fragapane said: "I'd like to thank Russell for hosting the field day and his warm welcome to all growers and the DPI and VGA for organising the event."





Safe work practices

Helena Whitman – IDO Western Victoria

Over the past few months, the VGA Vic IDOs have been assisting Andrew Sullivan from the Victorian Farm Safety Centre in his project identifying practices that may lead to injuries from manual handling activities on farm.

This has been identified by WorkSafe Victoria as the main type of injury in our industry with more than 266 claims since 2004. The aim of the project is to reduce the number of injuries and claims resulting from these injuries and ultimately reduce premiums paid by growers.

"I am mainly looking at injuries caused through repetitive work, awkward body positions, applying force and handling loads," Mr Sullivan said.

"All these occur during picking, planting and packing of vegetables."

By undertaking farm visits Mr Sullivan has been able to identify several simple solutions and with the aid of an ergonomist, will develop a series of fliers explaining simple actions or changes that should reduce injury.

"The objective is to identify solutions that are achievable and that with little or no cost outlay, can be implemented by all businesses large or small," he said.

Growers visited by Mr Sullivan have said that they have also benefitted from the visit by being able to discuss concerns that they may have in their workplace. Some suggestions or solutions were so simple that changes were implemented immediately.



"The objective is to identify solutions that are achievable and that with little or no cost outlay, can be implemented by all businesses large or small."

Pictured above: Andrew Sullivan. Photo courtesy *The Weekly Times*.

"There are also some situations that are outside of the growers' control," Mr Sullivan said.

"We hope to be able to discuss these with other sectors of the supply chain."

The project should be completed by December with a roll-out of information sessions and workshops for growers.



Good Food & Wine Show held at Melbourne Exhibition Centre



Luis Gazzola, Alan Crosthwaite, David Fussell and Tony Imeson.



Jo Richardson with Vince Doria.



David Wallace with Jo Richardson.

Did you visit Jeff's Shed over the weekend of 3, 4 & 5 June?

If you did, you will have experienced a wonderful array of fresh Victorian produce and the odd measure of wine.

If not, you missed a great opportunity to see a wide range of fresh produce being cooked and sampled.

VGA Vic grower representatives Luis Gazzola, David Wallace and Vince Doria were in attendance each day at the Melbourne Market Authority Stand to answer questions and inform consumers on the

selection and preparation of quality vegetables.

This annual event is one of the rare opportunities that growers have to promote the value of eating fresh vegetables - "The Health Food of the Nation."

VGA Vic welcomed the opportunity to join with the Melbourne Market Authority in presenting fresh produce to the consumer at the show.

Executive Officer's corner



VGA Vic is somewhat unique as a State Association in that its existence relies entirely upon Vegetable Grower membership and Industry Associate membership support. Membership is of vital importance to the ongoing services provided to Victorian vegetable growers.

Each financial year membership recruitment is top priority, not only for renewal of existing memberships but to encourage and recruit non-members in support of the vegetable industry.

Membership of VGA Vic plays a key role in the development of the vegetable industry

in Victoria and combines State and National industry issues with the VGA Vic role as State Member of AUSVEG, our national peak body for vegetable growers.

Executive Committee

Our Executive Committee meets monthly, consisting of grower members, including a President, Vice President and Treasurer appointed annually. Nominations are called for in July each year and all members are encouraged to consider nominating for the Executive Committee.

Luis Gazzola will have completed six years as President this year and is eagerly awaiting a successor to be appointed for 2011-2012.

Please seriously consider your support of the vegetable industry by responding to the membership of VGA Vic when you receive your renewal or invitation to join.

TAFE numbers fall

We have experienced the demise of training courses at one of the popular campuses at Werribee and have seen facilities closed down. Due to lack of numbers in TAFE courses there is now doubt that horticultural courses combining landscape, nursery, fruit and vegetables will continue and the major growing areas for vegetables in the south eastern and western regions of Victoria will have no training facility for certificate or diploma courses. Concerned members of the industry are raising the question that without training of future farm operators, how will the vegetable industry continue to grow and develop?

VGA Vic is not a registered training organisation and is only subject to the complaints from members when there is no readily available training facility suitable for trainees or farm hands in the growing areas of Victoria. TAFE Colleges, Primary Skills Victoria and the Growing Leaders Industry Programme are crying out for students to enrol and are not able to obtain sufficient numbers to successfully deliver courses.

Imported produce

Large amounts of fresh produce are being imported from overseas at an alarming rate and the ease in which they are allowed to enter Australia under the existing free trading agreements and biosecurity inspections is a great cause for concern. Will lack of training and increased imports herald a drastic reduction in vegetable production farms in Victoria and for some the demise of their livelihood?

VGA Vic update

Our VGA Vic website promotes the critical and often undervalued role of vegetable growers in their daily struggle to reliably produce the healthy food we all enjoy at our dinner tables. The site regularly attracts over 3000 visitors each month. Searchable content has expanded to almost 2000 pages of interesting articles, over 300 R&D report summaries, as well as topical news and events. Go to www.vgavic.org.au

We are pleased to welcome a new member to our VGA Vic team Rod Hall commenced 9 June 2011 in the role of part-time Membership Services Officer. This role in conjunction with our two IDOs is a further development by your Association in its representation of vegetable growers in Victoria.

Keep Smiling,

Tony Imeson

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Activities for 2011 for your interest and participation

August 5	VGA Vic Annual Golf Day. Lang Lang Golf Club, South Gippsland - 9.00am
October 14	VGA Vic Annual General Meeting. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Spencer Street, Melbourne - 4.00pm

VGA Vic. proudly recognises our industry supporters:

