

VICTORIAN

SUMMER 2006-2007
ISSUE 28

VEGETABLE

GROWER



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:



LUIS GAZZOLA
President

Greetings to all VGA members, associates and industry supporters.

Our national vegetable organisation AUSVEG have been putting pressure on all State organisations over the past six months to consider a new draft constitution. We have made it very clear from the first draft issued that the VGA did not support this action and our concern along with other organisations is that the AUSVEG CEO is not prepared to listen to the industry and far too much time and money is being wasted on repetitive meetings held around Australia. There are far more important issues confronting industry that AUSVEG should be addressing. There has been attempts to delay the AUSVEG 2006 Annual General Meeting until May 2007, fortunately constant pressure from State organisations sense has prevailed and the meeting will now be held on the 10 January 2007.

The Australian Tax Office has been investigating depreciation of farm machinery, tractors and harvesters with a recommendation for extending the period to twelve years. The VGA Executive Committee responded with a maximum of six years, which has been supported by the Horticultural Group of the VFF.

A draft release from the Federal Government covering the proposed Horticultural Mandatory Code of

Conduct is to be debated at the first session of Federal Parliament in 2007. It is considered that to comply with the draft code there will be extra costs incurred by all growers in selling produce. The VGA will be submitting our concerns to the Federal Minister for Agriculture.

The unseasonable early summer weather and lack of rainfall is putting a strain on the quality of vegetables. All the media talk of drought and water shortages has not reduced production and markets remain oversupplied. Any grower experiencing loss of crops, financial hardship or stress from the drought can receive rural counselling and assistance by contacting the Victorian Farmers Federation for information.

A reminder that self-assessment for the Enviroveg programme is due for an up date. Workshops will be conducted in early 2007 in the Eastern and Western growing districts and a circular from Environmental Manager Helena Whitman will be distributed in the New Year.

At a recent growers advisory meeting held with the Melbourne Market Authority it was questioned why the Strategic Alliance Group were not recognised and supported in its determination to remain at Footscray Road. It was explained that the Market Authority were obligated to follow directions from the State Government. Growers did not agree and stated that the Market Authority should be supporting the market community and advise the State Government to abandon any market relocation plans.

During November my son Colin and I visited the Machinery Fair held in Bologna Italy. It was pleasing to meet up with other Victorian Growers inspecting the wide range of machinery manufactured in Europe. I would strongly recommend all growers if you have the opportunity to visit the 2007 event to be held in Germany.

We held our annual general meeting in October and I would extend my appreciation to all members of the executive committee for their support over the past year. The new executive was appointed and I would thank members for re-electing me as President for another term. The executive committee are faced with many industry issues not made any easier with new regulations and red tape, making our evening monthly meetings stretch well into the night.

Our Industry Development Officer Patrick Ulloa reports at all executive meetings, also to the IDO management committee chaired by Tom Schreurs. For any Research & Development issues or concerns please make contact with Patrick and he will be pleased to call out at the farm for a discussion. I would thank Patrick for the support he provides to Victorian vegetable growers through our vegetable levy funding.

I would take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy healthy and prosperous New Year with a good supply of Mother Natures Rain.

Luis Gazzola
President



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE VICTORIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY? LOG ON TO WWW.VGAVIC.ORG.AU

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2007

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Luis Gazzola 0418 172 320

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

David Wallace 0408 547 708

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Robert Nave 0417 301 578

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Anthony Mason, 0412 591 899

Silvio Favero, 0417 455 610

Paul Gazzola, 0418 556 366

Frank LaMattina, 035 998 5225

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DISCLAIMER

The purpose of the Victorian Vegetable Grower and the Vegelink newsletter 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 and the national vegetable levy. The information provided should not be interpreted as an advice or recommendation of any kind. The VGA and its officers disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from your relying on any information in this publication.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S CORNER POST



Tony Imeson, Executive Officer

THE 2006 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held in October resulted in the re-election of President Luis Gazzola (Somerville) and Senior Vice President David Wallace (Keilor) Robert Nave (Werribee South) was elected Junior Vice President. We also welcomed two new faces to the Executive Committee Craig Arnott (Clyde) and John Said (Werribee South). The new executive committee is listed on the front page. There was excellent discussion between members in attendance on issues facing the vegetable industry including correspondence signed by a group of vegetable growers requesting an investigation into holding a review of the vegetable levy legislation. This was referred to both AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia for comment. We have received advice that area meetings will be arranged in the New Year when AUSVEG will be in attendance to address the issue.

Life membership was presented to Silvio Favero for his commitment to the VGA and the vegetable industry. David Wallace accepted on behalf of the Wallace Family a certificate of appreciation from the VGA in celebration of 100 years of farming by the Wallace Family in Victoria. We always achieve more than a quorum at our annual meetings, however it would be appreciated if more members came along and participated. We will be sending out a survey to all members in the new year to determine what changes should be made when holding the 2007 Annual General Meeting to encourage more growers to attend.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE GROUP : The State Election reinstated the Labour Government and the challenge for the Market Strategic Alliance Group is to continue pressing the Government that market users wish to continue trading at Footscray Road. The responses to the voluntary contribution for the fighting fund to remain at Footscray Road has been welcomed, however there is still some grower stand holders and VGA members who have not responded. VGA appeal to ALL vegetable growers to support the Alliance fighting fund and send your contribution to the VGA office. To vegetable growers who are NOT members of the VGA we invite you to join and provide the strength and

unity required to ensure that any further discussions with the State Government are to the benefit of ALL vegetable growers.

The Federal Government recently released the Horticultural Code of Conduct Draft Regulations which will be debated in Federal Parliament early 2007.

Concerns remain that the legislation does not cover the first point of sale and will provide additional costs to growers in marketing their produce.

VGA MEMBERSHIP 2006-2007 invitations have been circulated to vegetable growers who are not members of the VGA to join and support the vegetable industry and to existing members who have not yet renewed membership. There are numerous issues that affect vegetable growers and require a one-voice industry support to resolve. Any discussion or negotiation is only effective when the representative body retains the total support and strength of participants in the industry. The VGA needs support from ALL VEGETABLE GROWERS IN VICTORIA.

Keep smiling
Tony Imeson VGA Executive Officer

VGA meets to discuss proposed new Ausveg constitution

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA) met to discuss the proposed changes to the Ausveg constitution.

Ausveg is the peak body of the national vegetable industry. It was established to provide a united national voice for the state grower associations. Now, the board of directors of Ausveg is proposing changes to the constitution that are likely to have a significant impact on the way Ausveg is funded, and on the relationship with its founding state organisations.

The changes were not initiated by the state founding organisations. This is a matter of concern to the VGA. During the meeting, John Roach (CEO of Ausveg) explained the need for the changes, but most meeting attendants remained unconvinced that the current constitution needs to be changed. The position of the

VGA continues to be that all state members can propose changes to the constitution as required during the annual general meetings. The VGA has joined other state organisations that have requested an annual general meeting to be held in December (2006) to openly discuss the changes proposed and other important issues.



John Roach (third from left to right) explains proposed change to Ausveg constitution

Vege.LINK

N E W S L E T T E R

YOUR LEVY AT WORK

Issue 28

SUMMER
2006-2007

UK farmers help Victorian growers fight Clubroot

Victorian scientists have been conducting research on clubroot for a number of years. Their discoveries and control management strategies are recognised as some of the most advanced internationally.

As part of their research, our scientists have developed tests to quantify clubroot in soil and water. Quantification of spores is important for growers. They need this information to make informed decisions regarding best control methods that can be applied according to the level of infestation. A low level of infestation will logically require less use of chemicals compared to a paddock infested with high levels of clubroot spores.

However, the test that was originally developed is quite expensive at \$400. Although this test has been used extensively by seed companies and seedling producers, the cost prevents routine on-farm use. It therefore became critical to develop an on-farm test that could be used routinely and at an affordable cost.

On-farm kits called 'Lateral Flow Devices' (similar to pregnancy test kits) have been used to detect diseases in the horticultural industry for a number of years. It made sense to test that technology and see if it could be applied to quantify clubroot infestation. UK growers were keen to see this concept developed. Growers in UK were quite aware of the research that was being conducted on clubroot in Australia and it made sense to them to work with Australian researchers that had already developed an advanced level of expertise on this disease. These growers wanted our scientists to develop a practical on-farm predictive test that would be accurate, fast, and economical.

Through the British Growers Association and the U.K. Horticultural Development Council UK growers provided \$400,000 over three years to conduct the research. Australian growers provided \$20,000 while DPI Victoria contributed \$120,000. The research project produced a prototype that is able to detect and quantify clubroot spores in soil and water. The device is able to produce a test result within 25 minutes and gives an indication of low, medium, or high infestation levels. It is expected that the cost of the test will be under \$10.

The test kit developed is clearly a great improvement on the test that had been developed previously. However, the test kit still needs to be improved further. It is hoped that with extra work, the improved test kit will provide results within 5 minutes and will be consistent across all soil types. Also, researchers expect to include an electronic reader as part of the kit to ensure that results are not dependant on variable visual assessments by the user.

To carry out these improvements, a new project proposal has been presented to the Australian vegetable industry to obtain research funding. Once again, UK growers are willing to continue the same level of financial support as in the past.

The way this research project is being funded is a good example for a model of international cooperation in research. One of the aspects that helped in this collaboration is that Australian and UK Brassica growers do not compete for the same markets and are therefore willing to join forces to make research more affordable. Other opportunities for international collaboration under similar conditions are likely to produce a very good return on research investment.

By Patrick Ulloa



Prototype of on-farm Clubroot test kit



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Class A recycled water tested to determine food safety implications

A team of researchers from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has been testing the impact of using recycled water for vegetable irrigation. Initially, the Department of Primary Industries wanted to determine if class A recycled water could have a detrimental food safety impact on crops irrigated with this water. DPI wanted to make sure the class A recycled water was safe to use in irrigation under normal growing conditions.



Recycled water trial site in Werribee

A trial site was set up in Werribee to compare the impact of using recycled water, river water, and the mix of the two. Big water holding tanks were installed and also an irrigation system that allowed the development of trial plots with the three different sources of irrigation water.

Tests have been conducted on the soil and the crops to determine both, potential contamination with microbes and salinity impact on the soil. After growing two crops, researchers have found that produce irrigated with class A recycled water did not represent any food safety risk.

From a food safety point of view, researchers have sufficient test results to be confident that recycled water can be used without any problems to irrigate vegetables.

From a salinity point of view the story is different. Researchers found that high salinity levels are likely to impact crop growth. This is likely to have an impact on the growing district since the type of soil of the region and the extensive cropping methods followed by local growers can accelerate the negative impact of salinity.

A DVD is now available that shows details of this project and include comments from the main researchers that have participated in the project. An interesting explanation of the soil type normally found in Werribee is also included.

For further information on this project, contact Robert Faggian (DPI researcher, 03 9210 9222)

For a copy of the DVD "Recycled Water for Vegetable Irrigation", contact the vegetable IDO (Patrick Ulloa, 0429 990 553 Email: ido@vgavic.org.au)



A 15 minutes DVD highlights results of the project



Drought.org.au- Have you Had a look yet?

www.drought.org.au is a Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) initiative designed to collate all the current financial and social support available to farmers in one place. The site will also have a forum for farmers to offer assistance for labour, fodder and advice. The site was launched on the 20th November at the Macalister Research Farm in Riversleigh.

The VFF is seeking information about drought events occurring across the state. If you have dates for farm walks, social branch functions (including lunches, BBQ's and dinners, discussion groups and meetings in your area) that you want farmers to know about, please let the VFF know.

Scholarships for students in areas hit by drought

One hundred prospective students in drought-affected areas will benefit from the University of Melbourne's \$500,000 Drought Recovery Scholarship program.

The University of Melbourne is offering Drought Recovery Scholarships to the value of \$5,000 each to assist regional and rural students – whose families have been hit by drought – to commence undergraduate study at the University in 2007.

Sixty scholarships will be allocated to students enrolling in Faculty of Land and Food Resources programs, especially at Dookie campus. A further 40 scholarships will be available to eligible students enrolling in any other University course.

Drought Recovery Scholarships are open to commencing students enrolling in a full-time degree at the University of Melbourne in 2007 and whose home residence (based on postcode) is within one of the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) areas as defined by the Australian Government Bureau of Rural Sciences. Priority will be given to students whose family is in receipt of EC Relief Support Payments from Centrelink and/or EC Interest Rate Subsidy Support administered by the relevant state authority.

See Scholarships selection criteria at www.services.unimelb.edu.au/scholarships/ugrad/

Parsnip Growers Check Their R&D Project

A levy funded project to investigate the causes of parsnip canker and the extent of losses has been under way for 12 months. A group of parsnip growers met with Dr Liz Minchinton, project leader, and Des Auer, project scientist (DPIVic), to review the research project that was approved by the vegetable industry.

Growers in Victoria have reported losses of up to 100%. Surveys of spring-harvested parsnip crops have confirmed these losses. Surveys also suggest canker may be present at lower levels at other times of the year.

The fungus *Itersonilia* can cause parsnip canker, but preliminary assessments of diseased plants have shown *Pythium*, *Phytophthora*, *Rhizoctonia* and *Verticillium* species are also associated with cankers. Pathogenicity tests have also implicated *Itersonilia* and *Rhizoctonia* as a cause of canker.

Itersonilia has been positively identified from 3mm diameter dark brown, irregular-shaped spots surrounded by a very distinctive yellow margin. *Itersonilia* produced resting spores (chlamydo spores) in culture. This has important implications in the detection and management of the disease.

Parsnip canker research has been undertaken in Victoria as well as Tasmania and Western Australia.

For further information contact Liz Minchinton (03) 9210 9222.



Parsnip with canker removed from the



Parsnip with severe canker symptoms

Information on Levy Funded Projects Now Available on the Web

Until now, it has been hard to obtain information about all the R&D projects funded by the industry. Because of the large number of projects, it was difficult to have the latest information available when needed.

Fortunately, a research and development database has now been developed that contains every project funded by the National Vegetable Levy. Eventually, each project in the database will include summaries, presentations, images, factsheets, newsletters and final reports. At the moment, most projects only have the title and contact details of the project leader, but it is clear that in time the database will become a one-stop-shop for research and development information.

To use the database you will need to complete an on-line form at www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm and within 24 hours you will have your username and password sent to you via email.

Soil Fertility and Compost Making Courses to be held in Victoria

Dr. Elaine Ingham will once again present a series of her entertaining courses to Victorian farmers. It is expected that the series will be presented in March in Gippsland and west of Melbourne. The courses will be run on a demand basis, so if you want to attend one of the courses you will need to complete an expression of interest and send it back to the event organiser.

For a copy of the expression of interest form, log on to the website www.agriculturalsolutions.com.au and go to the "Events Calendar" link.



Dr. Elaine Ingham during a practical presentation

Victorian growers review chemical needs for their crops

Access to suitable chemicals is an important aspect of conventional vegetable production. The industry's minor use program has been very effective in obtaining permits and MRLs for a number of useful chemicals for the industry. However, the industry is now reviewing the chemical inputs of major crops to ensure the permits and MRLs obtained are selected in a more strategic manner.

Peter dal Santo from AgAware works for the vegetable industry to run the minor use permit program. He met a number of growers in Werribee and South East Melbourne to determine the major pest and diseases that affect Victorian vegetable crops. Following a systematic analysis of each pest and crop combination, Peter and the growers he met were able to determine which pests and diseases are not being effectively controlled by the



David Fragapane (left) talked to Peter dal Santo about pest and diseases options for seedling producers

chemistry currently available to growers.

To do the analysis, growers took into account compatibility to IPM, risk of resistance or tolerance development, the need to alternate certain chemicals, and the risk of leaving unacceptable residues on produce.

The crops that were analysed were: Artichokes, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Coriander, Fennel, Leeks, Lettuce, Parsley, Parsnip, and Spinach. Also, Peter met David Fragapane (GroLink Nursery) to determine if some work would be required for pest and disease control during seedling production.

Now that the needs or gaps have been identified, Peter will consider all the possible control options available in Australia and overseas including the use of beneficial and pesticides. Again, parameters that will be considered will be IPM,

resistance risk, and potential to alternate chemicals. Once suitable pesticides are identified, the industry will apply for minor use or registration of that pesticide. This is a significant improvement to the 'wish list' system the industry used to follow before.



Peter dal Santo (second from left) explains the chemical review process

Horticulture Safety Chart Available

One of the best ways to protect your farm from preventable injuries and fatalities is to prominently display accurate, easy to read health and safety information.

Released in September, the Horticulture Industry Guide to Safety 2006/07 features the latest topics to help make safety easier to manage around your farm.

This colourful chart contains relevant topics for horticulture rural workplaces, including risk management, safety induction, safety signs, safety equipment, machinery operation and guarding, chemicals, the packing shed, cool room, drugs and alcohol, smoking, child safety, and emergency planning.

Already more than 6,300 copies have been sent to vegetable and fruit growers throughout Victoria free of charge for display on the shed wall or office.

Produced by Pro-Visual Publishing and agricultural OHS specialists Houlahan Safety Consultants, the chart forms part of a series of agricultural safety charts which are updated annually and validated by Farmsafe Australia.



For further information please call Pro-Visual Publishing on (02) 8272 2611 or email enquiries@provisual.com.au



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Summer Thoughts.

Life is like a grindstone,
 whether it grinds you down or
 polishes you up
 depends upon what you are made of.
Cheer Up!
 Remember today is the tomorrow
 you worried about yesterday.

Christmas and New Year Message

A wonderful festive season to
 all Vegetable Growers
 Enjoy a safe and happy New Year
 Thank you for your support throughout the year
 Looking forward to a rewarding year in 2007.
Keep smiling
Tony.I



VGA presents awards at the Annual General Meeting

Two distinguished VGA members received a special recognition during the last Annual General Meeting. Lou Gazzola, VGA president, presented a certificate to David Wallace in recognition to his family for 100 years of farming at Keilor (west Melbourne). Also, the president of the VGA presented Silvio Favero with a life membership to the association for his long and continuous service to the industry.



David Wallace (right) receives recognition to his family for 100 years farming at Keilor



Silvio Favero (right) receives life VGA membership for his service to the industry

Vegetable display at the Royal Melbourne Show

Jack Walker, a life member of the VGA, has once again created an exuberant vegetable display at the Royal Melbourne Show. The display was put together at the Melbourne Market Authority stand. Jack has been preparing this display on behalf of our industry for many years, and we hope this tradition will be kept alive for many years to come.



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