

EYES ON POTATOES

A U S T R A L I A N P O T A T O I N D U S T R Y C O U N C I L N E W S L E T T E R

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Quality control is a feature of meal preparation at Melbourne Health

Quality potatoes help patients recover

Melbourne Health buys 2,000 kgs of ware potatoes each week to supply 3,800 prepared meals a day for the Western, Sunshine, Williamstown and Royal Melbourne Hospitals as well as the Broadmeadows Health Service and Melbourne Extended Care and Rehabilitation Service.

The quality characteristics we look for in our potatoes are consistent size, fresh product with minimal chemicals and white with no black spots year round.



White, consistently-sized potatoes are sought

Product quality can be a bit of an issue, so we find we have to vary our recipes to cope with quality differences at different times of the year. The wetter months seem to be the worst for black spots; it's a situation we just have to manage, but it would be great if we could rely on product quality year round.

Dieticians set patient requirements for starch - a cooked weight of 90gm of cooked starch per meal - so it is optimal for us to have consistently -sized potatoes so we don't have to serve two potatoes on one plate and one on the next, which wastes time and produces an issue of how much we can fit on a tray of a specific size.

We don't specify potato variety to our buyer, except that it needs to be white and offer good quality for money.

The patients we serve tend to be older with more traditional meal preferences. Potato is by far the most popular vegetable and is therefore on the menu twice daily.

*Carmel Nee
Acting Food Services Manager
Melbourne Health*

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inserts

National Potato Business & Marketing Conference 2002

Insects & Diseases of Australian Potato Crops Order Form

Free field guide for Levy Payers!

In this edition of Eyes on Potatoes, Levy Payers will receive a free copy of "A field guide to insects and diseases of Australian potato crops".

Great trip to Tassie potato farm

Thanks to Linda Wilson

Many thanks to grower Stewart McGee who, with his father Gordon, spent three hours of precious harvesting time explaining the intricacies of his potato operation to the less experienced editor! Stewart grows processing potatoes and peas for McCains and Simplot, poppies and prime lambs for export on 380 hectares in the northern midlands 30 kilometres from Launceston, Tasmania – he farms with his wife Kerrie and parents, Helen and Gordon. Stewart says he would like to aim for a 62 tonne a hectare average on his shaley loam soil, a figure they've achieved on occasion before.



Stewart McGee (left) and his father, Gordon, at a Cressy-Longford Potato Productivity Group paddock visit.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Linda Wilson for her contribution to the potato publication national advisory group from October 2000 to May 2002. Linda brought the Tasmanian potato industry perspective to the job through her experience as Potato Production Officer – seed potatoes with the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment. Linda heads the Tasmanian certification scheme for seed potatoes and supervises production of mini-tubers and the tissue culture laboratory in Devonport, Tasmania.

Cathy Sage
Editor

EYES ON POTATOES



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R&D Committee Update

The Potato R&D Committee met in March 2002 in Launceston, Tasmania to consider full proposals submitted from research groups.

Industry Advisory Committee (IAC)

There was considerable discussion about the Industry Advisory Committee such as its role, composition, relationship with industry, how it differed to an R&D Committee, member's responsibilities and equity of project funding between fresh and processing sectors.

The decision to recommend to AUSVEG Potato Group and the Potato Processors Association of Australia to form an IAC was deferred to the May meeting to allow extra time for committee members to consult further with their industry groups.

Breeding, Evaluation and Commercialisation proposal

A concept proposal was discussed and it was decided that it be further developed into a Business Plan for consideration at the various potato meetings to be held in May.

Communication report

The Potato Internet Starter Pak update is near completion.

The Information Directory and the booklet "Outcomes from research funded by the potato levy" which focuses on the outcomes from the first ten years of levy funded research will be available by the middle of the year.



Ian Macleod, Manager of Serve-Ag Research talking to the Potato and Vegetable R&D Committees from Australia and New Zealand about the company's operations and research program.

Committee members looking at potatoes from the variety trial on David Addison's property at Moriarty.

A book and field guide on Insects and Diseases of Australian Potato Crops by Paul Horne, Dolf de Boer and Denis Crawford and published by Melbourne University Press will also be available by the middle of the year and promoted through Eyes on Potatoes.

A draft Code of Practice for Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) has been finished and included in the draft National PCN Management Plan. A workshop in May will consider aspects of the National Management Plan (See page 17).

The Potato Archives project is progressing well with the CDROM package to be available early in the second half of the year.

The national vegetable internet site involved gaining funding for further development from several sources including the potato and vegetable levies. The funding proposal to the Commonwealth Government's National Office of Information Economy was unsuccessful leaving a shortfall of \$120,000. Negotiations have been underway with various groups to address the shortfall.

Industry technology transfer workshops involving growers, processors and service industries are planned to start mid-year. These follow on from similar workshops held in the past which were well received.

Meeting researchers

The committee recognises the benefits of talking with potato researchers when meeting in different locations across the country. The committee has been disappointed that more researchers have not taken the opportunity to interact with the committee members during past meetings. Members would like to see researchers take greater advantage of these sessions and discuss outcomes of their projects and raise issues with the committee.

Joint meeting with New Zealand R&D Committee

The annual meeting between the Potato R&D Committee and the New Zealand R&D Committee was held to discuss issues of common interest. Project proposals from both Australia and New Zealand were discussed as well as a range

of issues impinging on the quality, selection and initiation of projects.

This year unlike last year there were no new joint projects supported. Currently Australia and New Zealand have three joint projects.

Young leaders

New Zealand this year will be hosting a tour of six young Australian potato growers that will include attendance at the VegFed Horticulture Industry Conference to be held in Christchurch in July.

Project proposals

Of the 18 full proposals looked at by the committee 13 were supported or provisionally supported. For some projects, more information was required to address concerns raised by the committee before a final decision could be made.

Details of the successful projects will be published in Potato Australia.

Special meeting

A special meeting of the Potato R&D Committee was held in Melbourne on Tuesday 7th May to discuss options for the structure of an Industry Advisory Committee. A model was suggested which was presented to the joint meeting of the AUSVEG Potato Group and Potato Processors Association of Australia later that week.

Dr Jack Meagher

Chairman

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Kevin Clayton-Green, Project Manager talking about operations at Forth Farm Produce.

APIC Briefs

A short meeting was held on May 9 to conclude a week of meetings between different industry sectors and a national PCN Workshop.

At the November 2001 APIC meeting concerns were raised by AUSVEG Potato Group about the operation of APIC, particularly the cost of administration and whether an incorporated council was the best way of addressing industry needs.

In Sydney in February 2002 a special meeting of APIC Councillors voted for the continuation of the council in its current form. At meetings held in May 2002 this was reaffirmed by discussions within industry groups.

APIC was seen as an important forum for the potato industry. The current structure would be maintained with the view of addressing concerns raised.

The Council will seek to appoint a new secretary, investigate transferring its incorporation to Victoria from NSW to reduce administration costs and encourage greater industry involvement.

For APIC to be effective though it will require the participating groups (AUSVEG Potato Group, Potato Processors Association of Australia, Potato Merchants of Australia) to feed issues into the forum for decisions to be made and actions to be taken. APIC can only be as good as the participation of the groups that form the Council.

Review of investment in R&D

Jonathan Eccles from Horticulture Australia reported that the preliminary work for the review was underway. The aim was to have the review completed within three months.

Potato R&D Committee report

The Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has been established.

A request was received for the inclusion of a seed grower on the Committee. Under the new IAC arrangements the grower members are selected by AUSVEG Potato Group. Seed growers can therefore lobby AUSVEG Potato Group to have a representative included on the committee.

Milton Rodda

APIC Chairman

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Welcome to Iain Kirkwood

Iain has recently been appointed to the national advisory group for the potato publications through his new position as Agriculture Officer (Potatoes) based at Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment's Devonport office,

Tasmania. Iain's main role in the Department will be in industry development, using the skills and experience of 12 years working in potato production. He will also assist with the seed certification section's seasonal workload.

For the past five years, Iain has worked at Technico Pty Ltd's head office in the southern highlands of New South Wales and has been responsible for various field plantings around Australia. He has also been involved in the company's Asian operations in Indonesia, Thailand, China, UK, and the USA. In 2001, he was based in Kunming in southwestern China, where he concentrated on Technico's Asian seed and chipstock programs in Thailand, China and India. His role was primarily as a plant pathologist dealing with regional disease issues.

Before emigrating to Australia in 1997, he worked for the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency in their seed certification division. His main role was to identify emerging problem diseases that warranted inclusion into the certification scheme.

We welcome Iain to the potato publication advisory group and look forward to his valuable input.

Cathy Sage,
Editor

Thanks = Potato R&D Committee

The new Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has been formed and replaces the Potato R&D Committee. (See AUSVEG Briefs.)

On behalf of the Australian potato industry I would like to thank the members of the Potato R&D Committee for their contributions.

Industry committee members have committed a significant amount of their own time to the research and development program. Being a committee member is not always an easy task. The issues being dealt with can be complex and a lot needs to be considered before a decision is made about whether a project is to be funded.

A special thanks also goes to Dr Jack Meagher, former Chairman of the committee. With so many competing interests and differences of opinion, the task of chairman can be difficult. Jack's depth of knowledge and enthusiasm has been an asset to the group and an important factor in the committee's success.

Milton Rodda
APIC Chairman

AUSVEG Briefs

Members discussed the future of APIC and the composition of the Potato Industry Advisory Committee in preparation for the joint AUSVEG and Potato Processors of Australia meeting. In regards to APIC, the group reaffirmed their support for a forum that represents the whole industry.

AUSVEG plus PPAA

Because of the issues being dealt with, a joint meeting of the AUSVEG Potato Group and the Potato Processors Association of Australia (PPAA) was held.

Review of investment in R&D

Jonathan Eccles from Horticulture Australia reported that preliminary work has been underway with the review to be carried out by an independent consultant.

APIC

PPAA and AUSVEG Potato Group supported the continuation of APIC in its current form. Concerns raised by the AUSVEG Potato Group and options for addressing them were discussed.

Levy participation

A proposal was put to the group by the PPAA that they would investigate withdrawing from the levy system and seek matching funds through the Voluntary Contribution option within Horticulture Australia.

The processors were totally committed to supporting future research and existing projects. Over the following months the PPAA will be looking at all the options with the view of making a final decision at their October meeting.

Industry Advisory Committee (IAC)

Discussions about the composition of the IAC were carried out at the PPAA, AUSVEG Potato Group and Potato R&D Committee meetings. As the AUSVEG Potato Group and the PPAA are the two industry bodies responsible for the levy regulation they have the responsibility of agreeing to the final composition of the IAC.

The decision was made that the IAC would consist of Processing and Fresh subgroups which would be responsible for allocation of their sector funds. The groups would meet separately to deal with processing only and fresh only issues and then come together for common issues.

Processing Group

- 2 French fry processors
- 1 crisp processor
- 3 French fry growers
- 1 crisping grower

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E-mail: seedpotatoshop@bigpond.com



ATRM203

Fresh Market Group

6 growers

Nominations for processor representatives would be managed through PPAA and grower representatives through AUSVEG Potato Group. The position of Chairperson for the IAC will be advertised and a decision made by a selection committee with representatives from AUSVEG Potato Group, PPAA and Horticulture Australia.

National Seed Certification

Russell Sully reported that the implementation of the new National Seed Certification System was proceeding well. Labels will undergo standardisation as quickly as possible.

Interstate trade

The group supported the principle of using PCN testing as the basis for demonstrating freedom and freeing up interstate trade. It was agreed that protocols for the above be developed for endorsement by industry.

Breeding, evaluation and commercialisation

A working group is looking at options for the Fresh industry. See separate article for details.

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PPAA Chairman

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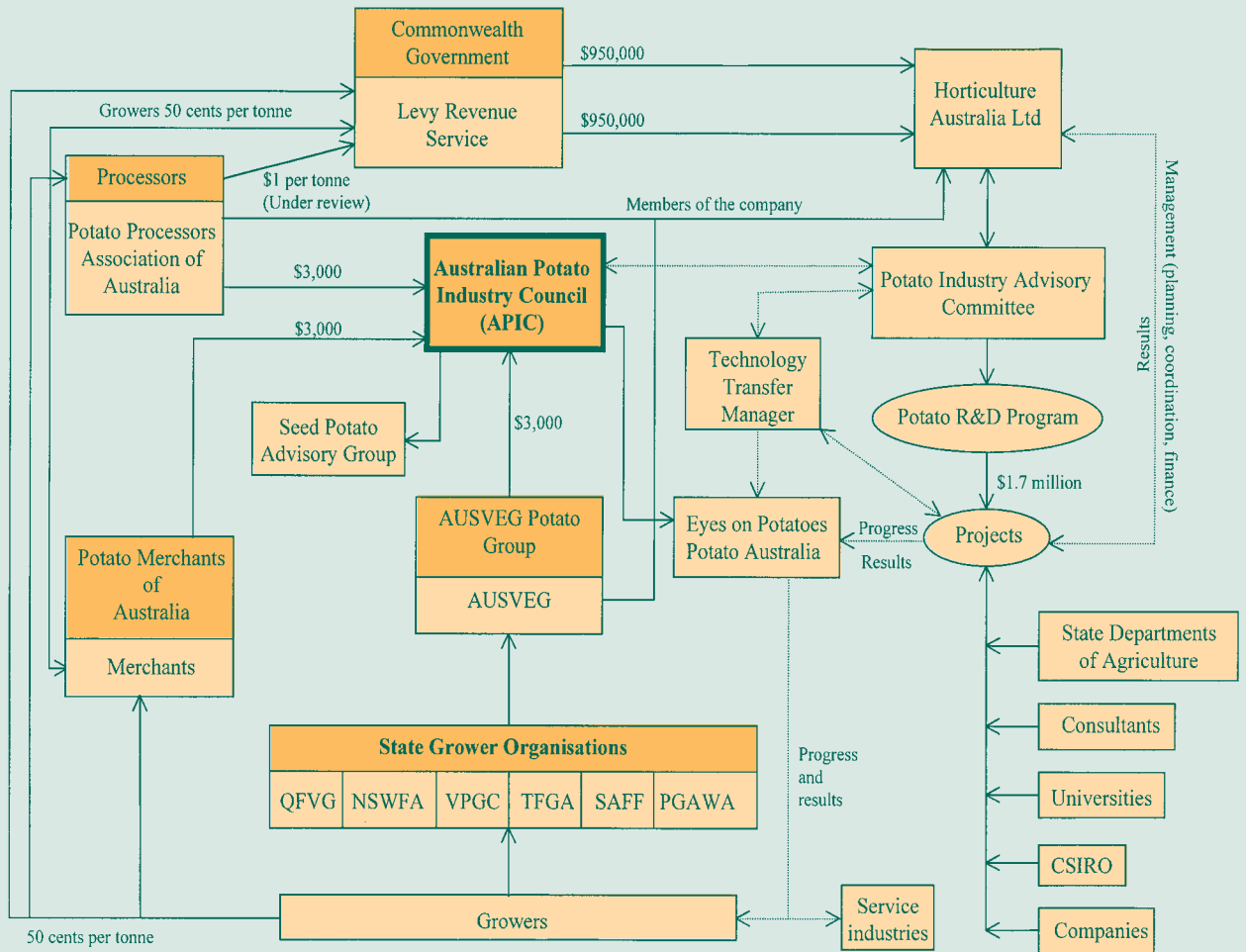
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Potato industry structure



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KEY

Australian Potato Industry Council (APIC)

Represents the interests of the Australian potato industry. The Potato Industry Advisory Committee works closely with the Council to ensure industry objectives are met. APIC publishes *Potato Australia* and *Eyes on Potatoes* on behalf of the industry.

AUSVEG

Represents the interests of vegetable and potato growers in Australia. Consists of the AUSVEG Board and AUSVEG Potato Group. Is a member of Horticulture Australia.

AUSVEG Potato Group

Represents the interests of potato growers in Australia. Pays an annual membership fee of \$3,000 to fund APIC's activities. It has two representatives on the Australian Potato Industry Council and at least one representative from each state on the Potato Industry Advisory Committee.

Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Government matches the levy money collected dollar for dollar.

Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia

National potato publications published by the Australian Potato Industry Council to facilitate better communication in the industry and greater adoption of technology from the potato R&D program.

Horticulture Australia Limited

Invests and manages funds for research and development on behalf of the potato industry and the Commonwealth Government. It works with industry to meet the objectives of the industry Strategic Plan, Potato R&D Plan and Communication Plan. Horticultural Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Horticultural Corporation merged to form Horticulture Australia in February 2001 to form a company owned by horticulture industries to provide R&D management and marketing services.

Levy Revenue Service

Administers the collection of the Potato Levy and then forwards the monies to Horticulture Australia. Is a unit within the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. (Internet: www.ffa.gov.au, then select levies and revenue service).

Potato Merchants

Merchants buy and sell potatoes. The Potato Levy is collected at the first point of sale for fresh, seed and export growers, usually by merchants.

Potato Merchants of Australia

Represents the interests of merchants. The group has two representatives on the Australian Potato Industry Council and one representative on the Potato Industry Advisory Committee. Pays an annual membership fee of \$3,000 to fund APIC activities.

Potato Processors Association of Australia

Represents the interests of processors. There are representatives from the crisping industry and the French fry industry on the Australian Potato Industry Council and on the Potato Industry Advisory Committee. Is a member of Horticulture Australia. Pays an annual membership fee of \$3,000 to fund APIC activities.

Potato Industry Advisory Committee

A sub-committee of Horticulture Australia Limited responsible for allocating research and development funds from the Potato Levy and Commonwealth Government matching contribution. This committee replaces the functions of the Potato R&D Committee.

Processors

Processors such as Frito Lay, McCains, Simplot and Snack Brands Australia collect the Potato Levy from processing growers and match it before forwarding it onto the Levy Revenue Service.

Projects

A range of organisations manage projects including State Departments of Agriculture, consultants, Universities, CSIRO and companies. In some cases they contribute financially to the work, especially State Departments of Agriculture. Many projects are therefore joint programs. All work is based on contracts signed with Horticulture Australia, which monitors project performance.

Seed Potato Advisory Group (SPAG)

Maintain and further develop the National Standards for Certification of Seed Potatoes for the benefit of the Australian industry. Consists of representatives from all states and chaired by the Australian Potato Industry Council chairman.

State Grower Associations

Grower associations in each state represent grower interests. Each association has a representative on the AUSVEG Board, AUSVEG Potato Group and the Potato Industry Advisory Committee.

(Internet: QFVG - www.qfvg.org.au

NSWFA - www.nswfarmers.org.au

TFGA - www.tfga.com.au

SAFF - www.saff.com.au)

Technology Transfer Manager

Employed to implement the industry's Communication Plan. Is an advisor on the Potato Industry Advisory Committee and Assistant Editor of *Eyes on Potatoes* and *Potato Australia*. Main focus is to improve the adoption of technology from the Potato R&D Program.

Note: The Potato industry structure has been modified from a diagram produced by Brian Newman for the former Potato R&D Committee.

Web Chains Web Chain Support Rollers Pintle Separation Belts

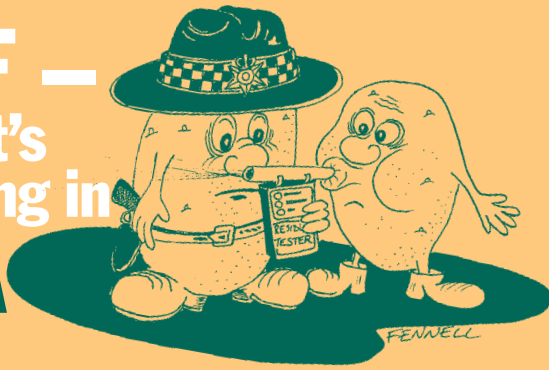
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SQF – How it's working in WA



In an Australian first in 1998, the Western Australian potato industry, supported by Western Potatoes implemented the SQF2000CM code through the entire potato supply chain.

Five years on, a progress review shows that uptake of SQF continues to be strong. Industry members accredited to SQF2000 or SQF1000 represent 90% of total seed potato production, 63% of total ware potato production, 100% of washpackers and about 10% of potato cartage.

The process of developing a documented Food Safety and Quality System and seeking third party certification can be a daunting task for any business that does not have the required skills or knowledge.

The independent grower audit has, in most cases, been a new and stressful experience, but one that most have accepted as an inevitable part of modern business.

Western Potatoes has provided help in the form of:

- employing an in-house SQF Practitioner
- preparing a generic industry and site specific HACCP* plans
- preparing generic industry and site specific Good Farm Practice manuals
- on-farm HACCP/food safety training for farm managers and key staff
- on-farm six monthly internal audits
- on-farm annual HACCP Plan Reviews
- annual chemical residue testing for all growers
- payment of all costs up to and including the Certification audit
- web site with access to all SQF master records

*HACCP – Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points

SQF2000 versus SQF1000

SQF1000 was introduced in 2000, supposedly to provide a simpler, more cost effective program for growers than SQF2000 (released in 1995). However, it created some confusion and concern for growers trying to determine which code best suited their business and customers.

A common WA potato industry and customer perception is that SQF1000 is a lesser standard than SQF2000, but we have not found it easier to implement or less rigorous in its quality expectations.

Both codes require a HACCP risk assessment of the process/product and the farm system must be designed to reduce identified risks to an acceptable level. Both also require full product traceability and there is very little difference in implementation and auditing costs for either code.

However, because most growers had adopted SQF 2000, we saw no benefit in promoting SQF1000 over SQF2000.

Benefits

Adopting SQF codes has provided real benefits to our potato industry despite farm to farm differences related to pre-existing management systems.

Benefits are:

- improved chemical storage/reduced chemical inventory
- more accurate/better targeted chemical applications
- better knowledge/compliance with legal requirements for chemical storage/use
- identified best practices amongst growers
- reduced waste (particularly post washing)
- more consistent recording of crop inputs
- more legible/accessible crop records
- improved traceability of raw materials and finished product
- continued access to major supermarkets
- systematic identification of improvements
- improved access to information on 'best practice' in potato production
- a management system that can incorporate future disciplines such as environmental management

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Accurate record keeping provides significant benefits to modern potato growers.

Challenges

Adopting SQF codes has also presented challenges. They are:

- minimising documentation required to demonstrate process control
- lack of recognition of benefits of SQF by consumers
- finding time and money for in-house and external (chemical user) training
- maintaining a working knowledge of HACCP methodology
- integrating the SQF system with environmental, occupational health and safety and other quality systems such as Cattlecare and MSA
- minimising external audit costs
- continuing to gain value for money from ongoing surveillance audits

Major produce retailers increasingly acknowledge SQF2000 as an appropriate standard for intensive horticulture. For potato washpackers, SQF2000 has been a requirement for selling into Coles supermarkets.

Short term benefits of improved chemical handling and record keeping are easy to see, but we believe the real benefit will be a longer term continuous improvement in potato quality and therefore customer satisfaction and net return to growers.

The \$600-\$700 a year costs associated with producing legible records to demonstrate procedural compliance and bi-annual external surveillance audits must be borne by the business.

In recognition of the additional costs growers incur to maintain SQF accreditation, Western Potatoes has established a wholesale pricing differential, effective 1st July 2002, for ware potatoes produced by SQF accredited growers.

Neil Graham

Western Potatoes

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Review of the WA Potato marketing act

The Western Australian Minister for Agriculture initiated a 2002 review of the Potato Marketing Act in accordance with the Act and to ensure compliance with national competition policy.

Current industry regulation in the Act restricts competition. These restrictions have been partly supported in previous reviews, but this review will examine whether they can be justified in the public interest as required by the National Competition Policy (NCP).

An industry discussion paper invites comment from a range of stakeholders and the public on aspects of the current legislative and administrative arrangements, issues associated with competition and possible alternative structures.

The paper identifies lack of grower title to ownership of industry marketing that could obstruct the industry from effectively dealing with major challenges and opportunities ahead.

A copy of the paper is available from the department's website at www.agric.wa.gov.au

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Latest R&D reports

The following is a list of Horticulture Australia Limited Final Reports released in the last three months.

Information packages and decision support software for improved nutrient management of potato crops PT94028

More economic and environmentally responsible use of phosphorus fertiliser in potato cropping on krasnozem soils in Australia PT97003

Improving seed potato production PT98008

Characterisation of Australian isolates of *Phytophthora infestans* and planning to manage new and more aggressive strains of the fungus PT98009

Study tour to USA and Europe to investigate innovation and trends with potato, carrot and onion production, July 2001 VX00032

These are available from Horticulture Australia for \$22.00 in Australia or \$US30 outside Australia including postage. To obtain reports send a cheque or money order with a note quoting the project name/s and project number/s to:

Ms Sharron Baker
Horticulture Australia
Level 1 Carrington Street
Sydney NSW 2000

☎ (02) 8295 2300

Fax: (02) 8295 2399

✉ horticulture@horticulture.com.au

Best Practice manuals for vegetable & potato production in Western Australia

Two publications will be released soon to help vegetable and potato growers in Western Australia achieve environmentally sustainable production.

The Code of Practice and Best Management Practices Manual are believed the most comprehensive documents yet developed for an Australian agricultural industry and aim to provide a model for other industries. Two years' collaborative work has gone into the publications by staff from the Potato Growers' Association of WA, Department of Agriculture, Water and Rivers Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, Western Potatoes and Vegetable Growers' Association of WA.

Compliance with the Code is voluntary. It provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and principles to help continually improve the industry's environmental management. Some sections, such as soil health, farm planning and chemical management, will be useful to all or most growing operations. Other sections such as salinity, waterways, groundwater monitoring and managing remnant vegetation will be more relevant to some businesses and less so to others.

The code and manual provide information for growers who want to set up an Environmental Management System (EMS) for their property. It is likely EMS would be an extension of the current SQF quality control, but relate to environmental aspects of management.

Many growers will find they already comply with most of the Code but will find it useful in providing ideas that can be used to improve their operation.

Publication and distribution of the documents is expected to be complete by August, 2002 and is being funded by Horticulture Australia, the Potato Growers' Association, landcare groups and government agencies.

Ben Rose
Development Officer
Department of Agriculture
Western Australia
☎ (08) 9777 0000
✉ brose@agric.wa.gov.au



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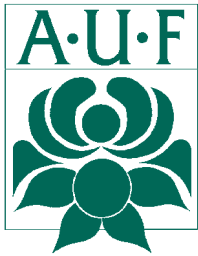
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The On-Farm Food Safety Program for Fresh Produce



Australian United Fresh to stage Horticulture 2002

Australian United Fresh (AUF) will stage this year's National Horticultural Industry Conference in Sydney from 10 to 13 September. The theme for the conference is Made in Australia with Australian speakers focusing on Australian industry successes and issues.

The conference replaces the Fresh conferences held for the past four years with the Australian Horticultural Corporation and in 2001 with Horticulture Australia Limited.

Among other considerations in choice of venue were the availability of lower-cost two-tied accommodation and its proximity to the Sydney Markets. A high priority for conference organisers is the opportunity to network and this has been factored into the conference agenda.

The 2003 conference will be held in Tasmania and coincides with that state's bicentenary.

For further information:

Col Scotney
☎ (02) 9763 1767
Mobile 0407 589 445

Jack Walker
Mobile 0414 435 319

Taking Freshcare Forward

Freshcare, owned by the Fresh Produce industry and further supported by Horticulture Australia Ltd, has a newly established office in Sydney and a network of approved trainers across Australia. Its focus is to greatly simplify access to the Freshcare program by guiding growers through a streamlined process from initial registration to full certification. The program also aims to maximise opportunities for FarmBis funding.

For further information, please contact:

Clare Hamilton-Bate
National Marketing & Liaison Manager, Freshcare
☎ 02 9764 3244
✉ freshcare@freshmarkets.com.au

Two packaged options are now available and provide the simplest route to Freshcare accreditation:

1. Full Freshcare Package	2. Freshcare Follow-up Package
<p>For growers who are new entrants to the QA process. This package includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshcare Membership • Initial training (one day) • Follow-Up Training (half day) • Third Party On-Farm Training Assessment • Freshcare Accreditation Certificate <p>This option should be available at a total cost of \$1,000 - \$1,200.*</p>	<p>For growers who have undertaken an Approved Supplier course. This package includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshcare Membership • Follow-Up Training (half day) • Third Party On-Farm Training Assessment • Freshcare Accreditation Certificate <p>This option should be available at a total cost of \$700 - \$900.*</p>
<p>* FarmBis funding is available to subsidise this cost in most States eg NSW and Queensland, 75% funding is available for Freshcare Packages.</p>	



Back copies of potato publications

I still have some copies of the following editions of Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia:

Eyes on Potatoes

1997 December

1998 June, December

1999 March, December

2000 March, December

2001 March, June, December

2002 March

Potato Australia

2000, 2001

Anyone wanting a copy of one of the above editions please email, fax or mail me your mailing details and the edition/s required.

Leigh Walters

PO Box 6014

Halifax Street

Adelaide SA 5000

☎ (08) 8232 5555

Fax: (08) 8232 1311

✉ lwalters@saff.com.au



No GMOs in certified seed

There are no genetically modified potato cultivars in the Victorian certified seed scheme.

Seed Potatoes Victoria (SPV) resolved a policy in 1999 that the Victorian certified seed scheme should remain free of genetically modified cultivars. SPV was concerned that varietal mixing during commercial production or during packing operations would potentially compromise the whole potato industry. Consumer backlash against genetic manipulation was becoming evident in 1999 and seed producers moved to protect the industry against any negative fallout on this issue.

The policy is still current and will not be altered until the seed industry believes that there is a major change in consumer sentiment.

Tony Pitt

Executive Officer, Seed Potatoes Victoria

☎ (03) 5623 4788

✉ agchall@sympac.com.au

Have your say - it is your industry!

If growers want to increase sales they need to produce better spuds that have more solids and do not absorb too much fat during cooking. Varieties are important to our future!

Growers need to take a greater interest in our breeding and evaluation program and support their representatives on the peak industry bodies (ie. APIC and AUSVEG Potato Group) and the Potato R&D Committee (now the Potato IAC).

These groups are working for your benefit but they can only be as good as the input from the people they represent. Opportunities can be easily lost if we do not get in their and join in the debate.

Don't leave it to your neighbour. Put your shoulder to the potato wheel!

Les Horsfield

Chairman

Potato Merchants of Australia



Athena Tashevsk
(Secretary), Peter
Hardman (Simplot),
Mark Heap (Simplot),
Tony Gietzel (Snack
Brands Australia –
Chairman), Milton
Rodda (McCains) and
Paul Frost (Safries).

Potato Processors Association of Australia

The Potato Processors Association of Australia was formed in 1992 to provide a united voice on issues of concern in the processing of potatoes. A meeting was held on Monday 6th May to discuss the breeding, evaluation and commercialisation proposal, Industry Advisory Committee, levy and APIC.

John Webster, Jonathan Eccles and Fiona Benyon from Horticulture Australia talked to the group about the Industry Advisory Committee.

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The GMO snippets

The following articles are from the February and April editions of GMOs – Guiding Meaningful Opinions, The Gene Technology Newsletter of the Horticulture Industry – compiled by Agrifood Awareness Australia for Horticulture Australia Limited.

GM Food labelling

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has announced that it is keeping a close watch on Australia's new GM food labelling system.

The ACCC administers the *Trade Practices Act 1974*, and its main responsibility is ensuring individuals and businesses comply with competition, fair trading and consumer protection laws.

In relation to labelling, the ACCC is particularly concerned about the proper use of 'voluntary' claims, or those claims that are over and above what is required by law. For example the claim 'GM-Free' is used for a marketing or competitive advantage rather than a legal requirement. Such claims must not be misleading to the consumer, and must be able to pass legal scrutiny.

The ACCC has issued a publication for small business that gives some useful advice for planning the labelling and marketing of GM foods. The publication *News for Business*, is available from – www.accc.gov.au

Market Research

A survey comparing organic and non-organic consumers in terms of their demographic characteristics; the factors that motivate their choices about food; and, their attitudes to food related issues such as biotechnology, was conducted by researchers from several Queensland universities last year.

Of the 1200 people surveyed, at least 40 percent of respondents claimed to have consumed at least some organic foods over the preceding 12 months. Both organic and non-organic consumers ranked 'concern over biotechnology' as an issue likely to influence their food consumption, however organic consumers expressed stronger levels of concern.

For more information: Kristen Lyons, Lecturer in Science, Technology and Society, Griffith University - kristen.lyons@mailbox.gu.edu.au

A recent survey of 500 people, conducted by Quantum Market Research for Biotechnology Australia, has shown that Australian consumers are willing to eat GM foods although they are still concerned about them. The survey replicates one conducted in May 2001 in order to measure areas of change.

The survey found that GM food issues were of lesser concern to people than new and emerging biotechnology issues such as human health and cloning. There was an increased awareness of biotechnology issues (76 to 87 per cent).

In relation to labelling, when asked whether labelling of GM foods would alter their buying behaviour of foods:

- Those who said they would buy GM foods rose from nine to 15 per cent.
- Those who said they would not change their behaviour dropped from 37 to 33 per cent.
- Those who said they would not buy GM foods decreased from 46 to 41 per cent.

Other findings include:

- 60 per cent of people said they would buy GM foods if they were healthier (65 per cent in 2000);
- 51 per cent of people said they would buy GM foods if they tasted better (41 per cent in 2000);
- 40 per cent of people said they would buy GM foods if they lasted longer (36 per cent in 2000); and
- 45 per cent of people said they would buy GM foods if they were cheaper (36 per cent in 2000).

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Val Murphy demonstrating her potato recipes at a paddock to plate seminar. Val conducts guided coach tours around the potato-growing area of Thorpdale, VIC.



Potato recipe

Potato coconut truffles, strawberry flavour

(a great way to use left over mashed potato)

1 cup of mashed potato

1 cup of icing mixture

½ teaspoon strawberry essence

a few drops of red food colouring (optional).

1½ cups of coconut

pinch of salt

Mix potato and icing together, then add coconut and mix. Add salt, strawberry essence and red food colouring if desired. Roll into balls, toss balls in extra coconut and store in a salad container in the fridge.

Val Murphy

Thorpdale

☎ / fax: (03) 5634 6267

To contribute:

Please send your favourite potato recipes and your photo (and stamped self addressed envelope for its return) to:

Potato Recipes

Cathy Sage

Editor, Eyes On Potatoes

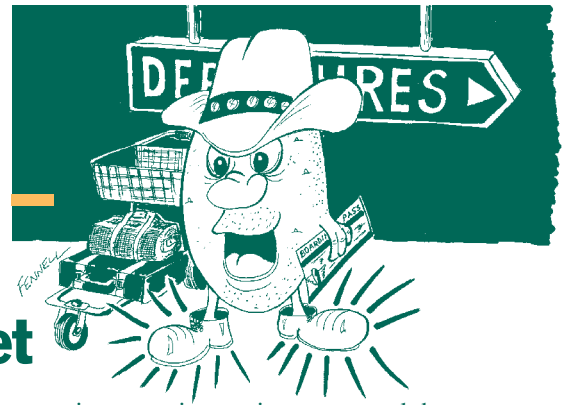
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Fly clean — wipe your feet



There is increasing security screening at airports around the world for nitrates, a common ingredient in explosives. These security measures can also detect residues from nitrate based fertilisers that are commonly used by farmers.

Before flying, make sure your clothing, footwear and luggage is free from any fertiliser residues. The easiest way to do this is to shower and change into clean clothing after using nitrate fertilisers and before flying. Rinse your shoes if they have been exposed to fertilisers. Prevent your luggage from being contaminated with fertiliser residues by keeping it away from where fertilisers have been. Carting your luggage in the back of the ute may not always be a good idea!

If nitrates are detected at the airport on your clothing or luggage, having some form of identification that indicates you are a farmer would be useful.

Information in this article was based on an item from the International Fertiliser Industry Association internet site and discussions with Qantas Security.

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World Potato Congress Industry Awards

Nominations are invited for World Potato Congress Industry awards, to be presented at the 5th Congress, to be held in Kunming, China, April 2003.

Nominations received will be considered alongside other nominations put forward in 2000, when worthy applicants were only unsuccessful as fewer awards were bestowed.

The Awards Committee policy is to recommend award winners from those who have made a lifetime contribution to the industry, to the Directors of the World Potato Congress.

Nomination forms can be obtained from:

Richard J Dadson
136 Perrinsfield
Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire
GL7 3SE, UK
☎ +44 1367 252989
Fax: +44 1367 253604
✉ RJDSPUD@Bigfoot.com
Closing date for Nominations -
30 November 2002

Call for applications

Chairman of the Potato Industry Advisory Committee.



Horticulture Australia

Horticulture Australia on behalf of the Australian Potato Industry is seeking expressions of interest for the position of Chairman of the Potato Industry Advisory Committee.

The Potato Industry Advisory Committee is responsible for the preparation of a 5 year Strategic Investment Plan, Annual Investment Plan and Annual Report that manages the investment from the Potato R&D Levy. The Committee is responsible for initiating new projects in line with the Industry's Strategic Investment Plan as well as assessing proposals seeking funds from the Potato R&D Levy. The Committee is comprised of industry representatives from the fresh market and processing sectors.

Position Description

The Chairman must

- Be independent of the executive of the Australian Vegetable & Potato Growers' Federation (AUSVEG) and the Potato Processors Association of Australia
- have excellent ability in chairing meetings
- have good interpersonal skills to guide committee members to focus on achieving positive outcomes for industry.

It is anticipated that the time commitment will be in the order of 2 to 3 meetings per year (approx. 2 days/meeting).

For further information please contact:

Jonathan Eccles
Horticulture Australia
☎ (02) 8295 2300 or
0407 242 757.

A detailed brief for this position is available from Dr Fiona Benyon at Horticulture Australia
☎ (02) 8295 2300
✉ fiona.benyon@horticulture.com.au

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PCN Workshop

Potato Cyst Nematode or PCN is a nematode that could cause considerable damage to the Australian potato industry if it became widely established in this country.

A workshop was held to progress issues relating to the development of the National PCN Management Plan at the Institute for Horticultural Development at Knoxfield in Victoria on the 7th and 8th May 2002. Workshop participants included industry representatives and government officials involved in quarantine, regulation and policy.

The National PCN Management Plan addresses four key issues:

- Managing a PCN outbreak
- Managing PCN infested land
- PCN Hygiene strategy
- Market access protocols

If anyone thought this was a straightforward exercise before the workshop, they soon changed their mind. The workshop was organised to facilitate discussion on a number of key areas for which the project team required

resolution in consultation with industry and government groups.

Some of the issues discussed included – interstate trade anomalies, area freedom and property freedom, differences between state regulations, compensation, incentives for reporting an outbreak, adequacy of current quarantine processes, social implications for people involved in outbreaks, overseas experiences, the role of certified seed and potato hygiene and how other countries such as New Zealand manage the problem.

The project team will now redraft the plan taking into account what was learnt at the workshop and will then seek final comment from a wide range of government and industry groups prior to its finalisation.

Gordon Berg
Department of Natural Resources and Environment

☎ (03) 9210 9222

✉ Gordon.Berg@nre.vic.gov.au



Breeding & evaluation update

The way we manage breeding, evaluation and commercialisation of new varieties has been under review. This is very important, as varieties can have a significant impact on the future direction of our industry.

A meeting to discuss a breeding, evaluation and commercialisation proposal was held between the stakeholders

– AUSVEG Potato Group, Potato Processors Association of Australia, Horticulture Australia and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, in Melbourne on the 8th May 2002. John Webster, the Chief Executive Officer of Horticulture Australia, chaired the meeting. Several other interested parties were also in attendance.

The proposal as presented at the meeting was not accepted. Further discussions are underway.

WA meets Asia for joint gain

Australian Youth Ambassador, Jo Embry is due to return home soon, after spending 10 months in Vietnam helping the Food Crops Research Institute (FCRI) in Vietnam gather economic information on potato production. Ashe Briscoe, who has also been successful under the Australian Youth Ambassador program, has joined Jo in Vietnam. Ashe will continue to work with the FCRI, investigating the benefits of disease free seed and improved agronomy practices for the Vietnamese potato industry. The Vietnamese project is being supported by AusAID, the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, Curtin University and FCRI.

A collaborative international project between the Department of Agriculture, Western Potatoes and the Indonesian food processing company PT Indofood Frito-lay Corporation has also begun. The project is looking at ways to increase yield, profitability and supply reliability of crisping potato producers in West Java, Indonesia. Hopefully, this will lead to increased exports of Australian Certified seed potato.

Still on the international scene, the WA Department of Agriculture has hosted the visit of a staff member of the East Javanese Department of Agriculture (Dinas Pertanian). Future collaborative work will focus on developing the potato industry in East Java, with an emphasis on the use Australian Certified seed.

Phil Ross
Vegetable Development Officer
Department of Agriculture
Western Australia

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Queensland

Rain - or rather the lack of it this year - is a talking point for most Queensland growers. While lack of water has not had an effect on many crops, growers would appreciate some good autumn/winter falls to recharge underground and surface supplies.

Low prices have also been of concern to growers, but there does seem to be optimism that prices will improve as the season progresses.

Indications are that north Queensland plantings will be equal to or even slightly larger than last year. A large early season crop planted is growing well. Insect and disease pressures have generally been low, and it is expected these crops will be of high quality and yield well. The production of gourmet market potatoes continues at a low level, with changes in varieties being grown rather than acreage produced.

Bundaberg plantings are similar in size to last year's and, like the rest of the state, the early plantings were made in hot, dry conditions. Later crops have been planted in cooler more favourable conditions. Insect and disease pressures have been low throughout the season and all crops are looking good and are expected to produce high, good quality yields.

The area planted to autumn crops (February planting) is less than normal in the Lockyer Valley, possibly as a result of poor potato prices and hot dry conditions. Indications are that the size of the spring crop (June/July) may also be down on the average. Both processing and ware crops that have been planted are looking good and expected to yield well. Aphid and thrip pressures have been low and while some crops have come under pressure from helicoverpa, they have been kept under control. Disease pressure has also been low.

The hot, dry start suffered by Darling Downs processing crops resulted in lower tonnage yields, without adversely affecting quality. The cooler conditions encountered by later planted crops have produced higher yields of similar quality. Insect and disease pressures have been low for the growing season.

Overall, Queensland crops are looking good with low pest and disease pressure. To date growers are expecting reasonable yields of good quality tubers.

Michael Hughes
Extension Agronomist
Department of Primary Industries

Western Australia

Local Certified seed producer, Tom Fox (Lake Jasper Certified Seed Potatoes) has recently hosted trade visits from Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Together with his exporting agent, I&R Resources, he plans to continue to build their trade of export seed potato.

A contract addendum has been submitted to AusAID to extend the Western Australian Department of Agriculture's Vietnamese seed potato project. If accepted, this will enable further agronomy work and trials to be conducted during the Vietnamese growing season (December 2002 - February 2003). Trial data has been collated and analysed for the past two years and promising varieties have been identified. Seed of these varieties will be bulked up this year in WA and exported to Vietnam in 2003.

On the domestic scene, potato growers contracting to the Manjimup Apple Export Syndicate (MAES) French fry operation were dealt a blow recently with the liquidation of that company. Some growers have lost payments for potatoes delivered and others were left with potatoes in the ground. Fortunately, the French fry operation has been purchased by local potato growing family, Bendotti's, and the plant is again operational.

The commercialisation of potential new ware varieties for WA was again recently discussed by the WA Potato Varieties Commercialization Group. It was agreed that Western Potatoes would develop a commercialisation plan and approach Horticulture Australia Ltd. for funding assistance.

Western Potatoes continues to promote varieties as an integral part of their promotional campaign and report there is increasing demand for varieties such as *Royal Blue*, *Ruby Lou* and *Kestrel*.

Consumers are becoming more aware of the eating qualities of these varieties and there is starting to be a shift in demand from the major variety *Nadine* to these and other varieties.

Phil Ross
Vegetable Development Officer
Department of Agriculture

Tasmania

The harvest of the processing crops is progressing very well, with better than expected yields given the very dry conditions in the latter part of the season. Tuber size in many crops has been generally smaller than on last year but with higher than normal tuber numbers. The crop duration has generally been good with some crops running out to 170 days.

The dry autumn resulted in some early harvested crops showing a high level of bruising where the crops were not irrigated prior to harvest. *Ranger Russet* has performed particularly well this season and volumes are likely to increase next season.

The early harvest incentives for seed crops introduced by both processing companies have started to show dividends both in terms of seed quality and to increased harvest capacity.

A mid-season outbreak of foliage late blight was largely contained by applications of Ridomil (although a shortage of this chemical appears to have been a problem in some areas) and so far there have been no signs of tuber blight. The levels of scab have been on par with previous years but with a higher than normal level of powdery scab, probably as a result of a wet period around tuber initiation.

The dry weather has resulted in harvest damage, powdery scab, and rhizoctonia problems that have impacted the fresh market industry this year. Prices have generally been down due to cheaper imports from the mainland.

This season the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, with the assistance of the processing companies, carried out a comprehensive virus survey on all seed crops. A low level of virus was detected throughout the state and a management plan has been implemented to limit its spread and impact on the industry.

Iain Kirkwood
Agricultural Officer (Potatoes)
Department of Primary Industries,
Water and Environment

ROUND-UP

State

New South Wales

Digging of the early potato crops in the Dorrigo and Robertson districts started in early December and finished in early May. Crop yields were down in some areas due to the dry growing conditions. With an oversupplied market, fresh market prices (on farm) dropped from \$400 a tonne in January to \$200 a tonne by late May.

Digging of the main crops in the Guyra, Orange, Crookwell and Tumut districts started in late February. Despite a dry start to the season, most areas had average yields due to the late rains in February. Crisping crops had excellent yields although dry matter contents were variable. The weather has been dry over the harvest, with some districts having to wait for rain before starting to dig.

Digging of the seed potato crops is also under way in the Tableland's districts. Seed areas are similar to last year. There has been a steady demand for seed during the first half of the harvest. This year's recommended price for Crookwell Certified Seed is \$480 a tonne plus GST.

Sowing of the late crops in the Maitland and Dorrigo districts started in January and finished in February. Planting of the Riverina late crop started in February and finished in mid-March. Late crop areas are similar to last year. Most planting's had good crop establishment and have experienced low pest and disease pressures over the growing season.

With the mild growing conditions growers expect average crop yields when digging starts in the Maitland district in May and in the Dorrigo and Riverina districts in June.

Stephen Wade
District Horticulturist
NSW Agriculture

South Australia

The potato industry is still managing the positive and negative effects from the cool and mild summer and autumn we have experienced during this growing and harvest season.

The early processing varieties such as *Shepody* yielded above average with average quality in the South East. The mild summer conditions with few hot days provided excellent growing conditions.

The harvest period was longer for early crops but this did not clash with the main *Russett Burbank* harvest as this variety was later this season due to the longer growing season resulting from the mild weather.

The main *Russett Burbank* harvest is in progress with 75% of crops harvested. When completed, Safries will have about 40,000 tonnes in storage. Yields are slightly above average with quality average, although some Hollow Heart damage has been reported.

The South East had an unusual amount of late blight this season, which was related in part to the mild weather conditions.

The ware industry has continued to harvest above average yielding crops which has produced a very flat market price. Once again, the mild weather has assisted in producing excellent crops.

Seed crops have generally yielded well with good quality tubers, due in part to the excellent growing conditions.

Bob Peake
Horticultural Consultant
PIRSA Rural Solutions

Victoria

Seed crops in Victoria have a reduced area certified this year. The rejection rate of crops has been average. The crops matured later than normal caused by the late planting, due to rain in spring. Similar to other states, some Potato Leaf Roll Virus (PLRV) was evident this season.

The price for commercial potatoes will discourage growers from purchasing fresh certified seed stocks. There has been wide spread publicity to encourage commercial growers to discard crops which show PLRV. If infected crops remain in the system, they will be a source of infection for next years crop.

Thorpdale seed and ware crops have good yields, although some ware crops have small potatoes. Harvest has nearly finished.

Ballarat crop yields have been reasonable this year with the late season. McCain stores were full in the second week of May so the processing harvest has been progressing well, while seed and fresh crops were late due to the late sowing.

Koo Wee Rup swamp had good yields this year. Most growers have finished harvest with a few still digging.

South Gippsland, Otways and Portland seed grower's harvest is under way with growers hoping the dry conditions continue for some weeks yet.

Bruce Fry
Horticultural Extension Officer
Department of Natural Resources and Environment

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