

# 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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## Gourmet spud appeal

The first impression you get talking to Michael Mow, boutique potato retailer at stall 108 - Prahran Market, Melbourne, is he is passionate about his customers and his spuds.

What started out in 1983 as a basic fruit and vegetable retail enterprise for Michael at age 22, has turned into a speciality stall for gourmet potatoes, onions, pumpkins and garlic.

Michael says he now carries about 30 different gourmet potato varieties, to please his various customers.

He puts the rise in his customers' demand for gourmet potatoes down to the fact he gradually introduced new varieties on request and held tasting sessions at his stall.

### Know your spuds

Michael says it helps to really know each spud and he advises his customers on the best potato for each purpose.

"People ask me what I think is the best potato for roasting, slicing, chips or salads or they want a particular style, for example, creamy and doesn't fall apart," he said.

"I have a microwave oven here and I let them have a taste or they go home and try what I suggest, and if they like it, they come back and I order more.

### Value for money

Michael started 20 years ago with just a few varieties but demand just grew.

"The gourmet lines cost me a bit more, especially since I have an agent at the wholesale market, but I can retail for a premium price – on average 30%-50% higher for the gourmet varieties compared, let's say, to some standard supermarket retail varieties," he said.

"We also have certain lines that are generally cheaper than supermarket prices.

"My customers tell me that while they pay a higher initial price for my gourmet potatoes, the shelf life is longer, with no green ones, and the taste is better for the uses they want than the basic potato they can buy elsewhere. They think the gourmet potatoes are value for money."

### Seasonal products work best

Michael has found it best to go with seasonal products, usually buying direct from the wholesale market through his agent but also dealing with some growers direct.

"From late October to the new year, I carry mainly Tassie potatoes, with a few from Queensland and South Australia," he said.

"The Tassie bred lines I generally carry are *Bintje*, *Dutch Cream*, *Royal Blue*, *Tasmanian Pink Eye* or *Southern Gold* and *Bismark*. South Australia supplies washed Colibans, Nadines and Desiree and I source brushed potatoes and *Red Pontiacs* from the Atherton Tableland in north Queensland.

"From March to October, I go more with the locally produced lines. Examples are *Patrone*, *Toolangi Delight*, *Desiree*, *Kipfler*, *Spunta*, *Nicola*, *Kennebec*, *Purple Congo*, *Pink Eye*, *Atlantic*, *Sebago* and *Russet Burbank*."

Michael provides his customers with special recipes to encourage them to try new tasty potato meals. Two recipes are provided with this article.

Michael can be contacted on

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## Salmon Smash

This is a simple, great tasting recipe.

500gm – 1kg *Toolangi Delight* (or *Bison*) potatoes

Smoked salmon

*King Island Fraiche* (light sour cream)

Chopped chives

Wash and scrub potatoes well with a clean scourer in hot water, boil them until cooked, then mash or puree until smooth. (There is no need to peel the raw potatoes before boiling as they have such fine skin). Add butter if desired.

Mix in sour cream and chopped chives to your own liking. Add strips of smoked salmon.

**Simply smashing!**

## Roasted balsamic potatoes and Onions

2 Tbsp olive oil

750 gms potatoes cut into 1" cubes

350 gm onions peeled, cut into wedges

1/2 cup Balsamic vinegar

1 Tbsp fresh thyme or 1 tsp dried thyme salt, freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 400°F/200°C.

Pour oil into shallow baking pan, add potatoes and onions and toss. Cover with foil and roast for 30mins. Remove foil and increase heat to 450°F/230°C, add remaining ingredients and toss well.

Continue to roast, tossing occasionally for 30-40min or until vegetables are brown and potatoes crisp on the edges. Serves 2-4.

**Great using *Kipfler*, *Patrone*, *Pink Eye*, *Bintje*, *Nicola*, *Desiree* or any yellow waxy potato.**

## Editorial

I would like to take the chance to thank the industry and Horticulture Australia for their continued support of the potato publications.

2003 has been an eventful year with water resource issues coming to the forefront, SARS delaying the World Congress and major changes in breeding, evaluation and the R&D program, to mention a few.

I apologise to any readers who received *Potato Australia* late. A problem with new software at the mailhouse was responsible for the distribution problems. But we are assured the situation has been dealt with and is unlikely to happen again.

I would also like to take this chance to thank departing member of the Advisory Group, Peter Dawson, from the Western Australian Department of Agriculture, for his excellent advice and input to story selection and development in the past year. At the same time I welcome Rachel Lancaster, a Research Officer in Vegetables, also from the Department, who has volunteered to join the advisory group in Peter's stead.

We have had a tremendous volume of articles this year and not all have been able to be included when planned. The report on how the fresh breeding and evaluation program will operate will be included in March 2004 *Eyes on Potatoes*.

On behalf of the editorial team, advisory group and all those involved in the production of *Eyes on Potatoes* and *Potato Australia*, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May next year bring you greater prosperity and happiness.

**Cathy Sage**  
Editor



**Horticulture Australia**

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# Vietnam

## -a future market for Western Australian seed

Vietnam is emerging as a market for Western Australian grown seed potatoes. The first commercial shipment of Australian grown *KT3* and *Eben* seed potatoes to Vietnam departed Fremantle in early November 2003.

### Growing environment

Vietnam's Red River Delta is the major potato growing region where 45,000 tonnes of seed is sown on 30,000 hectares. Many of the seed potatoes used by Vietnamese farmers are small, poor quality tubers freshly imported from China. Some Vietnamese farmers re-sow seed saved from existing crops but long storage under hot tropical conditions further reduces seed performance. Others have had success with true potato seed but because the resultant crop has greater size and shape variability, its marketability will be limited compared to crops grown from tuber seed. The combination of diseased seed sources, poor seed storage conditions and poor crop nutrition produce low average yields of just 12 t/ha. The first step to improve the Vietnamese potato crop is to provide a supply of affordable high quality seed.

### Project focused on seed supply system

A three year project funded by AusAID, the Department of Agriculture Western Australia, the Vietnamese Food Crops Research Institute and Curtin University examined ways to improve potato yield and quality in the Red River Delta, mainly through demonstrating an improved seed supply system.

It was established that the varieties, *KT3* (Vietnamese) and *Eben* (Phillipino) were preferred by growers in the Red River Delta.

We showed that *KT3* and *Eben* seed grown in Western Australia then grown out in Vietnam under good management produced high yields of 30 t/ha. When seed was saved from these crops and cool stored it also produced 30 t/ha in the second crop. The result was that Vietnamese farmers could, over a two year cycle, make much greater profit using seed grown in Western Australia despite its initial higher price. The recent increase in cool storage capacity of the region means that that will not be a limiting factor in the future.



Crate of *Eben* seed about to be packed for shipment to Vietnam at Southern Packers, Manjimup

### Emerging commercial opportunities

The Vietnamese have agreed to buy *KT3* and *Eben* seed grown in WA, providing a new market for our seed growers. A risk is that if the Vietnamese decide not to buy seed in the future, no other markets are yet established to take that seed especially *KT3*.

Western Australian growers are also starting to show an interest in growing *Eben* seed - a processing variety - for which there are other probable markets besides Vietnam such as the Philippines and Thailand.

Research has also been conducted in Vietnam on the performance of high quality cut seed. We found that when freshly imported large seed is cut, it performs just as well as freshly imported round seed. The ability to export the entire seed crop to Vietnam will increase the value of this market for Western Australia seed potato producers. Also, the Vietnamese economy is in a state of transition to a more free market system which should further enhance trade opportunities.

A successful workshop in Vietnam in August 2003 reported the results of the project and also provided opportunity to negotiate sales of Western Australia seed potatoes to Vietnam.

Dr Ian McPharlin

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Chris Perrott (Western Potatoes), Jo Embry, Terry Hill, Ian McPharlin, Peter Dawson (Department of Agriculture Western Australia) examine a joint project trial with members of Thuy Duong cooperative



Terry Hill explains the benefits of Western Australian seed at the workshop



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## 'Watching brief' for potato growers

**Potato growers and other horticulturists growing annual broadleaved crops need to familiarise themselves with branched broomrape and maintain a vigilant watch for the parasitic weed, according to Phil Warren.**

Mr Warren heads the SA-based team set up to contain and eradicate the weed, which poses a threat to Australia's export trade because it is a banned import for many of Australia's major trading partners.

The eradication initiative is resourced by State and Federal Government, Grains Research and Development Corporation, Horticulture Australia and other stakeholders and beneficiaries who recognise the risk posed by this feared weed.

### Outbreak in SA contained

Australia's only known outbreak of branched broomrape, which parasitises a wide range of broadleaved crops and weeds including major horticultural crops, is currently contained within a 180,000 hectare quarantine area in the SA Murray Mallee.

About 500 paddocks are known to be infested with the weed, a straw coloured plant that emerges, produces bell shaped pale blue to mauve flowers and sets thousands of fine, dust-like seeds within a few days.

"These SA farmers are carrying the burden of eradicating this dangerous weed on behalf of all Australian growers and exporters," Mr Warren said.

While most of the producers currently under quarantine are dryland grain farmers, several major horticultural producers in the quarantine area have the weed on their properties.

At this stage the parasite has not been found attached to any of the horticultural crops being grown on those properties but the potential is there for significant direct damage to crops resulting in reduced yields and quality, Mr Warren said.

And that is in addition to the threat to local and international terms of trade.

### Favourable climatic conditions

"Climatic studies indicate conditions are right for branched broomrape to establish in most of Australia's major horticultural areas should it escape the quarantine area.

"The recently completed annual inspections which are part of the quarantine regime have revealed new infestations with high numbers of very healthy plants as a result of the good growing conditions this season, so there is no doubt about the ability of the pest to thrive in Australian conditions.

"The good news is that, despite the near ideal growing conditions and the luxuriant infestations where no control measures were used, around 60 per cent of paddocks known to be infested carried no emerged branched broomrape this season.

"This indicates the research on broomrape has identified effective control measures and farmers are applying those results to prevent emergence of the pest, which is the first step towards eradication."

### Australian potato susceptibility

It is currently not clear whether or not branched broomrape attacks the potato varieties grown in Australia but the major vegetable crops grown in Australia are hosts, Mr Warren said.

"And it is clear broomrape will attach to other members of the potato family such as tomatoes plus crops in the carrot and Brassica families.

"Any susceptible crop taking more than 40 days to mature is at risk.

"Legume crops are occasional hosts and cucurbits, which are hosts overseas, are currently being tested in SA."

### Findings for potatoes

Branched broomrape attached to one of five potato varieties tested in initial trial work, Mr Warren said, but, experience overseas indicates there can be significant varietal differences in susceptibility, so having four varieties reject the parasite is no indication that others will not be subject to attack.

In the field, broomrape has not attached to the potato varieties grown in South Australia planted in infested paddocks.

Given the overall situation, it was decided the best way of protecting the rest of Australia – including horticulturists – from the threat of branched broomrape was to apply the limited available resources to developing control and eradication measures that would be effective in dryland farming systems crops, Mr Warren said.

### Chemical control potential

"Researchers working on eradication of this pest are well aware of the need for measures to contain and kill it in horticultural crops as well as in grain crops, and several of the chemicals currently being trialled for their effectiveness against broomrape have potential for use in horticultural crops," he said.

"At this stage potato growers and other horticulturist are in the fortunate position of not being under attack from this damaging parasite because the farmers in the quarantine area and the broomrape team are holding the line against the pest.

"But the risk continues, and horticulturists need to be on the look out for the weed, which in irrigated production systems can emerge at any time of the year."

For further information contact the Broomrape Information line on 1800 245 704.

Graeme Jennings

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1. Balali et al. Anastomosis group and pathogenicity of isolates of *Rhizoctonia solani* from potato crops in South Australia. Plant Pathology 1995  
2. Data on file



Participants at the September workshop

The next stage consists of:

- working with key groups to define the work program and researchers to be involved. (This is likely to involve researchers from different institutions and even from overseas to provide the necessary expertise for the task.)
- identifying other sorts of funding to support the program.
- developing a business plan.

Work on the new research program is due to begin in July 2004.

# Potato IAC Update

**It has been a busy time for the Potato IAC this year with processing and fresh sub-committees developing investment plans for their industries.**

In Potato Australia the Financial Report on p19 indicated funds available at 30 June 2003 were \$1,312,040. As most of this money had already been committed to existing work in 2003/2004, there was little opportunity to start new work. As the IAC wanted to refocus the research program, it was an opportune time to sort out the changes before committing to a new round of projects.

## Workshop – September

In September a workshop was held in Melbourne between researchers and the processing sub-committee of the Potato IAC. Its aim was to discuss the technologies and R&D opportunities for addressing priorities identified by the sub-committee.

The priority areas for research for the processing industry being:

- Soil pathogens and soil health
- PVX, Y and S
- Tomato spotted wilt virus

The spirit of cooperation and the depth of talent on display impressed the sub-committee over the two days of discussion.

Information gleaned from the workshop was then summarised and sent back out to the sub-committee for further consideration.

## October meeting

The whole committee met in October in Adelaide. The Fresh and Processing sub-committees met separately and then came together for common issues.

## Processing sub-committee

The sub-committee worked through the September workshop outcomes and discussed what areas of research would be supported and likely resources that would be required.

## Fresh sub-committee

The focus for the Fresh sub-committee is market development. Fresh potato consumption is declining and halting this trend is seen as a priority by AUSVEG and the IAC.

Running a market development program means raising a marketing levy and at this stage there is not sufficient support in the industry to go down this path. If a marketing program is to be supported then it needs to be demonstrated that growers will benefit from its introduction.

The first task for the sub-committee has been to look at the reasons for people not supporting a marketing program and to obtain input to the discussions from marketing specialists.

Some reasons put forward include:

- Growers would not benefit from any value gain as it would be captured by those further up the value chain.
- Some large merchants were not supportive of the proposal. Unless large merchants and packers are on side, many growers are not likely to be supportive either.
- Growers are concerned they are only one of the players in the supply chain so why aren't the other players also contributing.
- Some growers have a market niche and can sell all their potatoes at an acceptable price and did not feel they would benefit from a National Marketing Program.
- The previous proposal lacked detail. Growers wanted to know what they were investing in.
- The levy is seen as another tax and not an investment.

All these issues are important and will need to be addressed if any new proposal for a marketing program is to be put forward for consideration. At this stage the sub-committee is investigating the feasibility of doing a pilot program to demonstrate what can be achieved. A proposal for the pilot will be considered at the next meeting in March 2004.

It would be fair to say that gaining industry consensus to address the decline in demand for fresh potatoes is quite a challenge. At present the sub-committee is exploring possibilities. A proposal will then be put together as to a way forward and put out to industry for consideration.

## Levy enquiries

AUSVEG and Potato Processors Association of Australia (PPAA) are the contact points for queries regarding the levy collection.

## Annual Investment Plan

The first draft of the 2003/04 Potato Annual Investment Plan was checked by the committee and is available by contacting John Oakeshott; Tel: (02) 8295 2324 or email: John.Oakeshott@Horticulture.com.au.



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## GVP Cap

The committee was informed that Horticulture Australia had reached the Gross Value of Production (GVP) cap. This is the amount the Commonwealth Government is willing to invest through matching levies and supporting Voluntary Contribution (VC) projects (see p20 for details).

## Communications Update

The Insects and Diseases of Australian Potato Crops is now out of print. The committee will revisit the need for a second edition next year in consultation with the authors.

The Potato book for children being produced by the Kondinin Group is progressing well with the first draft now out for checking.

The CropTest – Potato Crop Nutrient Evaluation System Market Research has been completed. A proposal to upgrade the package was requested by the IAC to be submitted for consideration at the March meeting (see p20).

As a result of the vegetable industry withdrawing support from the National Vegetable Internet Service, the IAC decided to support submission of a new proposal to be considered at the March meeting. The proposal would focus solely on potato industry needs (see p17).

## DNA probes

One of the research and development areas being looked at for future funding is better disease diagnostic tests using DNA probes. Being able to measure how much disease is present in the soil would provide farmers, researchers and advisers with an extremely powerful tool.

While in Adelaide the committee took the opportunity to look at the commercial service using DNA probes being run for the grains industry by the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

## Late blight

Trevor Wicks and Tony Pitt investigated a late blight outbreak in Papua New Guinea early this year and provided a report in Potato Australia. Although not yet confirmed, it appears the new strains are involved which has serious implications for Australia.

Trevor briefed the committee on the outcomes of the trip and the group discussed the implications of the new strains of late blight entering Australia.

*John Gallagher*  
Chairman

# QA Woolworths Enhance Quality Assurance Requirements

**Woolworths have enhanced their quality assurance requirements, with the initial release of their Woolworths Quality Assurance (WQA) Standard (formerly WQMS) Version 1.**

Woolworths commitment to its customers, that the products they sell are safe and of the highest quality, is further supported by the new WQA standard, with some key changes to their previous standard (WQMS 10).

The key change in the new WQA Standard impacting the fresh produce industry is the change to the 'Approved Supplier Program' requirements for their direct suppliers, namely.

***"Produce Trade Partners* (direct Woolworths suppliers) **sourcing from growers, wholesalers, brokers etc shall have evidence that the supplier has recognised Certification eg Freshcare, SQF, HACCP, WQA etc****

Woolworths Trade Partners (direct suppliers) will be expected to work towards implementing this enhanced Standard in order to continue to supply Woolworths, the new system to be fully implemented by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

Woolworths updated standard means that all growers whose product is destined for Woolworths (via a Co-op, wholesaler or broker dealing directly with Woolworths) must have a certified food safety system in place.

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The AUSVEG Potato Group met in Sydney in November.

## National PCN Management Plan

The Committee expressed concern that this issue has dragged on for so long and indicated the project needs to move to the next stage of holding a national workshop as soon as possible. The aim of the workshop is to address any points of disagreement with the view of gaining final consensus on the plan.

## Communications Report

Leigh Walters provided a brief update to the Group on the status of current communication activities.

Key issues discussed included withdrawal of the vegetable industry from the national internet service, the next national conference proposed for 2005 and changes to the national distribution system.

## Enviroveg

The vegetable industry has appointed Sarah Hearn as National Program Manager for Enviroveg to develop the self-assessing system for environmental issues on the farm.

Knowing that the farm is being managed in an environmentally friendly way and being able to demonstrate it is becoming an important issue for farmers, which can impact on marketing and dealings with government.

The Enviroveg program gives growers the opportunity to highlight things they are doing well to protect the environment. The program also helps to identify other practices that could be adopted to further improve the farm management system.

Although the potato industry is not directly involved in Enviroveg it is in a good position to capitalise on the benefits of the work. See [www.enviroveg.org](http://www.enviroveg.org) for more information.

## Proposed scoping project for viruses

The proposed scoping project for viruses by the Industry Advisory Committee produced a lively discussion.

The current certification process is based on visual inspection.

Surveys that use the more expensive laboratory tests can sometimes pick up virus that is not visible in the field. So if levels higher than 0.01% of Potato Virus S, for example, were found then this could impact on the amount of seed that would be accepted into G2 and could reduce certified seed supply to the industry.

There was no disagreement that if a problem was found it needed to be addressed. The issue was that the survey results could impact on what could be accepted by certifying authorities. The argument put forward was that results should be confidential so industry could assess if there was a problem and if so address it with minimum disruption.

The opposing argument was that growers had the right to know the quality of the seed they were receiving regardless of whether the information came from a survey or through the certification inspections.

An interesting dilemma that was passed back to the Potato IAC for consideration.



Tony Pitt (Potato Council, Vic), Euan Laird (AUSVEG CEO) and Des Jennings (Vic)

## Fresh National Evaluation and Commercialisation Committee

As Chairman I would like to acknowledge the effort put in by the Fresh National Evaluation and Commercial Committee in developing the new arrangements for the breeding and evaluation of fresh potatoes. It has been a lot of work for the voluntary members and the challenge has been taken on by the states in a very positive manner.

## Retail Grocery Industry Code of Conduct Review

A submission has been sent to the Review focusing on the need to improve the transaction process between farmers, merchants and supermarkets. The goal is to have better terms of trade for growers.

## Elections

The committee remains unchanged.

**Chairman** – Dom Della Vedova

**Vice Chairman** – Neil Perry

**Board representatives**

Dom Della Vedova, Phillip Beswick, Neil Perry

**APIC representatives**

Phillip Beswick, Geoff Moar

## Promotion – not only an issue for growers

When we think about promotion we often forget that other groups also have an interest in promoting fresh vegetables.

A study reported in the Medical Journal of Australia in May highlighted that almost 60% of Australians are overweight – similar to Americans. This and other reports in recent years have raised alarm bells in health departments around the country as obesity has a major impact on health.

So what does this have to do with potatoes? Quite a lot!

Eating fresh vegetables is an important part of any strategy to encourage people to lose weight. If our industry is going to think about promotion then it needs to be taking advantage of what other groups have to offer who also have a similar goal.

Working with other groups such as health departments could produce far greater benefits and at a much lower cost for the potato industry than what we could achieve on our own.

Something to think about.

*Dom Della Vedova*

*Chairman*

(08) 9776 7248

[domdella@bigpond.com](mailto:domdella@bigpond.com)





Australian Fruit & Vegetable Coalition

## National Fruit and vegetable Campaign

The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Coalition launched a national campaign to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in Australia on the 26th November in Canberra.

The average intake of fruit and vegetables in Australia is significantly below what is recommended for most age and gender groups. Research shows that an adequate intake can not only help to reduce obesity, but can provide direct protection against a number of debilitating conditions and chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke and some forms of cancer.

According to the World Health Organisation, seven of the top ten risks of disease and death involve diet and activity. Many of these factors could be addressed by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

The Australian Fruit and Vegetable Coalition has been formed to explore partnership opportunities to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

It has the following founding members:

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia
- Australian Food and Grocery Council
- Australian Retailers Association
- The Cancer Council Australia
- Dietitians Association Australia
- Horticulture Australia
- Central Markets Association of Australia
- National Heart Foundation of Australia and
- Strategic Inter-Governmental Nutrition Alliance (SIGNAL)

SIGNAL is made up of representatives from:

- Australian Department of Health and Ageing
- all State/Territory Government Health Departments
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- New Zealand Ministry of Health

This is a major initiative involving a partnership between industry and government.

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# State Government supports continued **Potato Industry Regulation** in Western Australia

**The State Government has used research provided by independent consultants and commissioned by Western Potatoes to maintain the orderly potato marketing system in Western Australia.**

Western Potatoes prepared a detailed submission for the Ministerial Review (finalised in August) by addressing economic, social and environmental issues of the current system and probable effects of a change. The research demonstrated a 'net public benefit' to the Western Australian community of the present system and was relied on by the Government to justify its retention to the National Competition Council.

A comparative pricing survey, commissioned by Western Potatoes and conducted by independent market research company, Market Equity, was also used extensively to demonstrate consumers were not disadvantaged by higher retail prices through the regulated system. The pricing survey, supplementing Australian Bureau of Statistics pricing data, actually showed retail prices in Perth were significantly lower than other Australian capitals for the 18-month survey period. Retail pricing levels proved to be an important consideration, along with demonstration of net public benefit in maintaining the regulated system.

As a follow up to the Review, the Minister has requested the formation of an Implementation Committee with industry stakeholder representation to discuss and recommend amendments to current legislation. The Committee will be drawn from the Department of Agriculture and Western Potatoes staff, growers, washpackers and retailers.

Helen Stevenson

Marketing & Business Development Manager  
Western Potatoes

(08) 9335 8999

helens@potato.wa.gov.au

## Benefits of WA's potato marketing system

*(Letter written by the Chief Executive Officer of Western Potatoes congratulating the Government on its decision)*

*Published: West Australian: Monday 25th August 2003, P 17.*

"Dear Sir,

The State government has made the correct decision to retain the present system of potato marketing based on the research supplied in response to the Legislation and National Competition Policy Discussion Paper.

The research demonstrated:

1. A net public benefit exists for all taxpayers and therefore consumers in the State when economic, social and environmental considerations are taken into account.
2. Independent research has shown that retail prices in Perth are well below the National Average and have been the lowest in Perth of any Capital City for well over a year. Consumers are not disadvantaged. *[Note: the pricing data used by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) is obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Cat. 6403. The ABS have stated the prices they produce cannot be used for comparative purposes between Capital Cities.]*
3. Potato growers supplying the domestic Western Australian market produce in excess of 30 different varieties of potatoes each year. The question why all varieties don't get displayed in major retailers should be directed to those retailers. The answer could possibly be that the retailers are restricted in their shelf space display area.
4. In excess of 70% of the potatoes come from growers certified to SQF quality standards. No other horticultural product can boast this fact.
5. If there is a change to the present system, rural areas would be significantly affected. You only need to look at the recent dairy industry to see how deregulation has affected the economy in rural areas.
6. The present system provides a fair return to all industry participants without one particular sector having dominance of the supply chain.
7. Taking into account the above points, it is clear the present system works for everybody, so why change it?

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS PERROTT

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**Western Potatoes**



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# New Monceren® Applicator

Elders Ltd is pleased to announce the arrival of a purpose built applicator for Monceren DS (from Bayer CropScience) for the control of Rhizoctonia (*Rhizoctonia solani*) in potatoes. The applicator, which has been produced overseas and used extensively in Europe and New Zealand over the last few years with outstanding results.

Adam Archibald, Elders VP Ballarat, Horticultural Agronomist, said “the Monceren applicator has the ability to apply a consistent coating over each seed piece at planting.”

“Thus providing more uniform control of seed born Rhizoctonia,” he said.

The unit is attached to either a 2, 4 or 6 row planter and is operated by a 12 volt motor that drives a shaft attached to a series of nylon brushes which in turn pushes the Monceren DS through a series of apertures. These apertures can be adjusted according to the required rate. The Monceren DS is then transferred down through a tube into the pickup point of the couplings. The potatoes that gather in this region are continually rotating and receive thorough coverage.



“This machine now eliminates issues associated with occupational health and safety with powder getting on people when applying it out in the paddock, as well as wastage occurring through being blown away,” Adam said.

Greg Murphy at Dunnstown has fitted the unit to his 2-row planter and has noticed the ease of application and the consistency of coverage. Greg commented “I went back to a paddock I planted last week and dug up a number of seed pieces randomly and found excellent coverage of Monceren on all seed pieces. This proved in my mind the applicator was doing an excellent job. Ease of application is basically what its all about. Before on a windy day without the applicator you could not even try to use a powder. Now it doesn't matter about the wind, you just pour the Monceren in the hopper and off you go”.

The applicator can be calibrated for other types of powders making it an extremely versatile unit.

Elders holds the exclusive rights for the sale of the applicator in Australia.

**For more information contact EldersVP Ballarat Horticultural Agronomist,  
Adam Archibald on 0407 447 745 or your local Elders branch.**



# Annual Levy Payers Meeting

**The first Annual R&D Levy Payers Meeting was held in Sydney on the 17th November. Although only nineteen people attended, it set the scene for how future meetings would be held. A key concern of many was how to gain greater participation of levy payers in future meetings.**

## Background

With the formation of Horticulture Australia, came a requirement for an annual meeting similar to a shareholders meeting of a public company. The shareholders in this instance are levy payers – growers and processors.

Signatories to the legislation for levy collection are AUSVEG and the Potato Processors Association of Australia. Horticulture Australia manages the levy money collected from growers and processors, and the matching contributions from the Commonwealth Government. The Australian Potato Industry Council (APIC) hosts the Annual Levy Payers Meeting on behalf of the above organisations.

The Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) is an industry committee of Horticulture Australia and advises the company's Board how to invest the levy and matching Commonwealth funds.

The changes may seem a little confusing at first. It needs to be remembered that Horticulture Australia is a company limited by guarantee unlike Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) that was a statutory corporation, which was a government entity. As a company, Horticulture Australia comes under the Corporations Act in a similar way to other public companies.

## The meeting

The following was the agenda for the meeting:

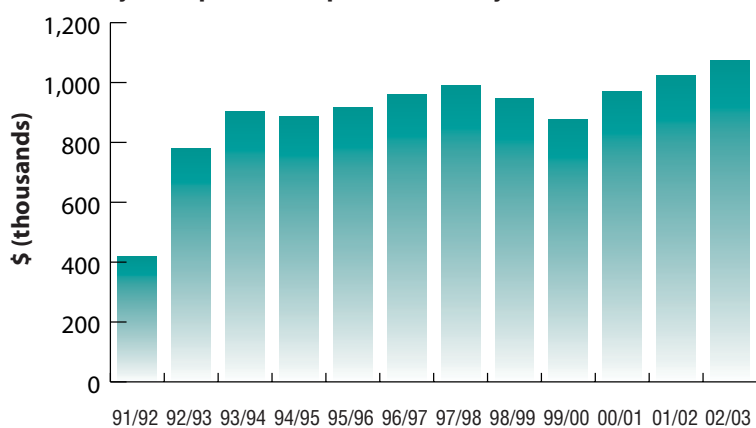
- IAC members and structure
- Potato program activities including an Annual Investment Plan
- Horticulture Australia initiatives
- Financial report for 2002/2003 and 2003/2004
- General business
- Questions

For those unable to attend the meeting, potato program activities and the 2002/03 financial report were reported in Potato Australia.

## Levy program 2002/2003

In 2002/2003 the amount invested in potato R&D was \$2,598,635 and the amount in projects involving all levy paying industries through the AusHort program was \$51,155, making a total of \$2,649,790 invested in R&D.

## Levy receipts for the potato industry 1991/92 to 2002/03



In 2002/2003, 14 projects were completed (see Potato Australia for details).

Two other highlights in the past financial year were:

- (1) A review was completed of the effectiveness of the potato levy program over the last decade (summary in Potato Australia or a full report may be obtained from Horticulture Australia) and
- (2) The R&D program was restructured to better meet levy payer's requirements (see p6).

## New initiatives from Horticulture Australia

The AusHort program, which involves all levy paying industries, is being replaced by five new strategic initiatives focusing on issues of common concern across most of horticulture. These are:

- **Consumer satisfaction**
  - Meeting consumer requirements for fresh fruits.
- **Health**
  - Promoting the health benefits of vegetables and fruit
- **Export**
  - Addresses three key areas:
    - Market access – breaking down the barriers
    - Market development – retaining the opportunity
    - Market benefit – growing the benefit
- **Communication**
  - Providing an electronic gateway to horticulture. (This compliments the potato industry's internet service)
- **Water**
  - To ensure ongoing access to water for horticulture

These initiatives will be reported in the potato publications when they are further developed.

## The future

As part of General Business, the issue of how to involve more levy payers in the meeting was discussed. The reality of holding a meeting of this type is that no location is ideal. Australia's size and the cost and time taken to travel interstate by air or road is asking a lot of busy growers and processors.

One suggestion was that the meeting could be rotated around regional centres. This created problems though for those travelling from interstate by air for which a capital city is more convenient and less costly.

Creating a virtual meeting by linking several centres by video conference links was also considered but rejected as this was also too restrictive on participation. There was also doubt as to whether there would be enough interest in regional centres to justify the cost of the video links.

The solution proved to be quite simple. APIC meetings are run after AUSVEG meetings. Between the two groups there are grower and processor representatives for all of Australia.

Next year, levy payers will have an option of attending the meeting or putting their issues through the grower and processor representatives. The issues will be addressed at the meeting and a response sent back for those who cannot attend.

What made the solution attractive was that levy payers have an opportunity to have their say while costs are kept to a minimum as industry representatives will already be present for other meetings.

We would like to thank Jonathan Eccles and John Oakeshott from Horticulture Australia for their work towards making the first Annual Levy Payers Meeting a successful event.

*Tony Gietzel*  
Chairman  
APIC

*John Gallagher*  
Chairman  
Potato IAC

# UK, Netherlands Potato Value Adding



# Tour

**The Value Adding Potato Tour to the UK and The Netherlands in September has provided participants with a wealth of ideas that can be adapted for the Australian potato industry.**

The tour was developed in direct response to the National Potato Business & Marketing Conference 2002, which identified the need to transform potatoes from just a commodity. It is vital for potatoes to compete with other easy to prepare foods such as rice and pasta.

## Trend to ready-to-eat, exciting alternatives

The challenge facing the industry is to create new market opportunities. Consumers are busy and have less time to prepare food. The industry also needs to take advantage of Australia's multicultural make-up.

We need to promote the potato as versatile, exciting and, above all else, convenient. United Kingdom (UK) and European markets are working towards meeting these goals.

Supply companies in the UK are packaging potatoes to provide consumers with varietal information and recipes for new, exciting and easy to prepare meals. Ready to eat or par-processed products with quick, simple instructions are gaining popularity and capturing a greater share of consumer spending.

## From seed to shopping trolley

The tour visited a variety of research, breeding, packing and processing sites as well as a number of farms.

The tour also attended British Potato, the British Potato Council (BPC) organised event that takes a comprehensive seed to shopping trolley approach to looking at Britain's £3.6 billion potato supply industry.

British Potato is one of the many tools the BPC uses to market the potato industry. The BPC is levy funded and provides research, development, marketing, promotion, seed and export assistance to growers. (See their internet site at [www.potato.org.uk](http://www.potato.org.uk) for information.)



## Packaging alternatives

The standout packaging feature was pillow packaging, an attractive and modern presentation method. The pillow packs are neat and printed with valuable information regarding the potato variety, best use, ideal cooking method and origin.

Another opportunity is fresh potatoes packed for microwave cooking. Fresh washed new potatoes are packed in a microwave safe punnet ready to be heated and served. These punnets can also have butter, herbs and spices added.

## Summer salads option

Several UK companies have also developed a use for fresh potatoes 30mm and smaller - they pillow pack and market them as salad potatoes. Small potatoes packaged this way provide quick, easy to prepare meals for a number of uses.

A number of participating companies are now working to bring some of the innovative packaging and processing ideas to Australia.

Natasha Wojcik

ARRIS

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[nwojcik@arris.com.au](mailto:nwojcik@arris.com.au)

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controlling the disease from within the leaf.



# Group Sessions at Portland's Potatoes by the Sea

As part of the *Potatoes by the Sea* workshop at Portland, open forum discussions were facilitated through small group sessions. There were six separate groups of about 20 to 25 people and participants could raise any issue of concern and provide suggestions as to how to improve our industry.

As may be expected, the issues that arose were diverse and often complex. However there were a couple of resounding themes common to several of the group sessions. They were:

- Seed potato production is not sufficiently profitable. Cost increases have reduced the margin for seed growers, and the option for individuals to respond by expanding production is limited. Young people are not being attracted to seed production and to farming in general.
- More opportunities for interaction between seed growers and seed buyers in workshops and other mechanisms are required.
- Payment! The industry as a whole has a poor approach to paying for inputs and services. Seed growers have specific problems in getting paid for seed.
- Access to water for irrigation. Coupled with this is the increased influence that environmental groups are having on agriculture.
- We don't know how to deal with the GM technology. Want to have it because of the problems it might solve for farmers, but unwilling to really use it commercially because of consumer negativity.



- The access to varieties should not be restricted or controlled by any individuals or corporations. Plant Breeder Rights seems to work against the growers.
- It is hard to get skilled and experienced staff and most people have to be trained. Need to have better training materials. Occupational health and safety is one area in particular where more training resources are required.



These issues were common to virtually all six groups. Some of these issues are difficult to address, such as the quandary over GM technology. It is interesting to note there is an expectation from most growers that GM technology will make life easier and possibly give the grower more profit. Judging from the way in which intellectual property is being handled elsewhere, this may be naïve and the only beneficiaries of GM technology may in fact be owners of that technology.

Some of the issues however can be addressed, and a good example is better communication throughout the industry. This is an area where Seed Potatoes Victoria (SPV) could take the initiative. One suggestion was to have a one-day workshop in the intervening years between our biennial seed industry conference/workshop. Another suggestion was to run more district tours to invite seed buyers to see their seed growing in the field before harvest and despatch.

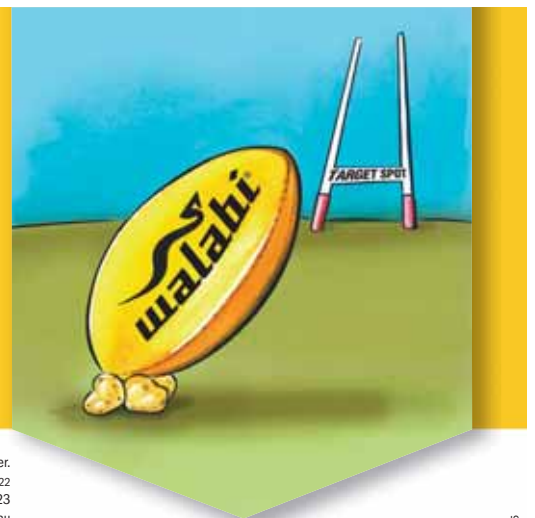
One common theme as a potential solution or outcome to some of these issues was the appointment of an Industry Development Officer. This may happen as a result of the poll for the Industry Development Order currently being voted on in Victoria.

There were other issues and suggested actions that came from this open forum and SPV will be considering these at their December meeting.

Tony Pitt  
Ag-Challenge  
☎ (03) 5623 4788  
✉ [tony.agchall@dcsi.net.au](mailto:tony.agchall@dcsi.net.au)

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# 2003 Potatoes By The Sea



The city of Portland in south west Victoria was buzzing with potatoes in August as more than 200 growers and industry people convened in the city centre and district for the third biennial seed potato industry conference, Potatoes by the Sea.

The conference comprised 50% growers and 50% trade representatives and technical specialists. The theme was farm best practice.

Keynote speaker, Pita Alexander, who runs a substantial farm accountancy and benchmarking business in New Zealand, told the conference that to be average is not good enough - if you want to be going somewhere you have to aim to be the best or up there with the best. This is a message many people have taken home from the conference.

Several speakers had big impacts. Milton Rodda challenged seed growers to think whether better ways exist to prepare seed for sale than to operate their own grading equipment with comparatively low outputs and low productivity per person.

Mike Stephens gave his philosophy on time as a farm resource, which, he argued should be looked at critically and managed with the same care as other resources such as money and machinery.

Richard Falloon from Crop and Food Research, New Zealand talked about their approach to containing powdery scab, including effective use of boron and several seed dips.

A field trip took the conference into Portland's potato paddocks. This provided an opportunity for Vin Rowe Pty Ltd and Dobmac Pty Ltd to demonstrate their potato planter models. It also provided an opportunity to look at how pipe laying equipment for low cost trickle irrigation works behind a planter. Conference delegates visited a well run coolstore facility and had insights into best practice coolstore management.

The first seed potato industry conference was held at Colac in 1998 and attracted just under 100 delegates. The second function was at Warragul in 2001 and 130 attended. This function has now raised expectations of a fourth conference likely to be in 2005. Discussions are also under way to determine if the next conference can be held with the Australian Potato Research, Development and Technology Transfer Conference, the last which was held in Adelaide in 2000.



**A brief forum was held before the Annual Levy Payers Meeting in November.**

## R&D report

The Council was briefed on the funding cap (see p20) and Industry Advisory Committee's (IAC) progress with the changes of the R&D program, and the breeding and evaluation.

The IAC has made considerable changes in the past twelve months and it is important that industry gets behind these changes and makes them work. As the world changes around us it is important we respond to ensure our R&D program provides us with the maximum possible benefit.

## Elections

The committee was returned unchanged.

Chairman – Tony Gietzel

Vice Chairman – Geoff Moar

Treasurer – Milton Rodda

Public Officer – Milton Rodda

## Current representatives include:

Growers – Geoff Moar (NSW), Phillip Beswick (Tas)

Processors – Milton Rodda (McCains), Tony Gietzel (Arnotts)

Merchants – Les Horsfield (Vic), Peter Toohill (Qld)

## 2005 Industry Conference

Preliminary discussions have been held about the possibility of the National Industry Conference being held in conjunction with the Seed Industry Conference in 2005 in Victoria. APIC fully supports the concept.

## Strategic Plan

The current strategic plan for the Australian Potato Industry has been in place for nearly five years. It is time the plan was revisited given the changes going on in the industry. The Council will start a review in July 2004.

*Tony Gietzel*

*Chairman*

 (02) 9609 0418

 [tony\\_gietzel@arnotts.com](mailto:tony_gietzel@arnotts.com)



(L-R) Neil Perry (SA), Geoff Moar (SA), Belinda McNeill (NSW Farmers), John Rich (TFGA) and Tony Imeson (APIC Secretary)

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Email: [info@potatocongress.org](mailto:info@potatocongress.org)



## Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, March 24th-30th, 2004

Lloyd Palmer, President of World Potato Congress Inc., announced recently that the 5th World Potato Congress, to be held in April 2003, is now rescheduled to March 24th - 30th, 2004. The Congress had to be postponed because of the SARS issue in China last April.

Mr. Palmer noted the Congress event program will be essentially the same as earlier planned, except that the Golf Classic is planned for March 25th instead of at the end of the Congress.

Conference delegates can register on March 24th and 25th, with the opening reception on the evening of the 25th. Congress sessions and the Trade and Technology Show will be held on March 26th, 27th and 28th. The Potato Variety Exhibit will be shown on March 29th, and the closing reception, dinner and entertainment will be held on the evening of the 29th. Farm and Agricultural Industry Tours will be conducted on March 30th.

Mr. Palmer stated he is pleased with the new dates as they are more convenient for many North American and European producers and industry service companies who are traditionally very busy at the end of April with preparations for the new crop.

Further information will be on the WPC Inc. web site at [www.potatocongress.org](http://www.potatocongress.org), or e-mail the Congress Office in Charlottetown, Canada at [info@potatocongress.org](mailto:info@potatocongress.org) for more information.

Local contact:

John Rich

 (03) 6331 6377

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# Internet service delayed

The good news is the internet service is about to enter the last phase. The bad news is the start of the last phase has been delayed.

The last phase of the National Vegetable Internet Service has required a lot of reorganizing. This is a result of a recent decision by the vegetable industry to withdraw from the project while they review their communication program. The vegetable industry may seek to participate but at a later date.

The Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has agreed to my recommendation that the potato industry split from the vegetable industry to develop an independent internet service. It was decided a new proposal be prepared for consideration at the March 2004 IAC meeting, and if approved, to begin the last phase in July 2004.

As the service will be a lot smaller, there will be no need to employ a Site Manager as originally proposed. This will greatly reduce ongoing costs.

It has been a long haul but we are nearly there!

Leigh Walters  
Technology Transfer Manager  
Australian Potato Industry  
☎ (08) 8100 8707  
✉ [lwalters@saff.com.au](mailto:lwalters@saff.com.au)

# New Potato Breeder

Tony Slater has assumed the position of Plant Breeder for the potato breeding program following Roger Kirkham's retirement.



Tony is based at Department of Primary Industries' Knoxfield and Toolangi sites.

He has been a plant breeder at Knoxfield for 14 years, working mainly on developing native plants for flower exports.

He moved to potato breeding because he wanted to work in a new field and saw similarities between breeding objectives in both.

He also saw the new breeding model for potatoes parallels a similar model he has used successfully to breed flowers for a number of years. The model relies on close industry input in setting breeding criteria, evaluating varieties and in early selection as well as commercialisation aims.

It also offered him the opportunity to be involved in another high-tech, outcome-oriented industry and to compare and contrast their methods.

Tony is looking forward to his new role and welcomes input from the industry on any facet of the breeding program.

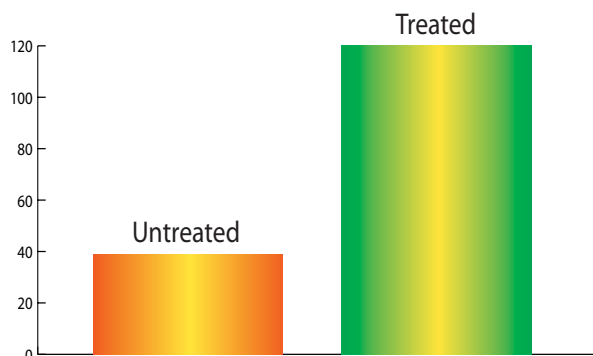
Tony can be contacted at the Department of Primary Industries by phone on (03) 9210 9222 or email: [Tony.Slater@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Slater@dpi.vic.gov.au)

Both Gyp-Flo (Liquid Gypsum) & pH Plus (Liquid Lime) are used widely within the Australian Horticultural industries. Most growers and producers start to apply Gyp-Flo and pH Plus as a means of correcting their soil conditions (Sodic and Acid soils). However, it wasn't long before they started to notice the increase in produce quality.

Glen McDonald, a Director of Ultimate Fertilisers, explains that both Gyp-Flo and pH Plus supply Calcium to the soil in an available form for plants to uptake, hence improving the calcium and quality levels of the produce.

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## Developing a better way of managing potato cyst nematode (PCN) in Australia

This levy funded project, begun in 2000, has developed a draft National Management Plan for potato cyst nematode (PCN).

Following discovery of PCN *Globodera rostochiensis* in Western Australia in 1986 and Victoria in 1991, eradication programs and management strategies have been developed to minimise effects on the Australian potato industry.

However despite this, and even though no further outbreaks have been detected, PCN continues to influence market access for Australian potatoes nationally and internationally. There is also need to review PCN management in Australia in light of the World Trade Organisation - Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement and in particular, current international policies on demonstrating area freedom for specific plant pests or diseases.

The development of the National PCN Management Plan was funded by the levy through Horticulture Australia and the Department of Primary Industries Victoria. The broad aim was to build on past information to develop a nationally agreed plan.

The plan includes:

- Managing a PCN outbreak
- Managing PCN infested land
- Market Access Protocol
- PCN Hygiene Strategy

In the plan, more comprehensive sampling and compliance strategies are proposed to demonstrate crop, property and area freedom from PCN.



PCN cysts on roots

Selected government and industry stakeholder groups are considering the management strategies, which will be reviewed at a national meeting in early 2004.

Horticulture Australia will support each producing state to send one delegate from its plant standards group and two from industry and grower groups or organisations.

The project team and steering committee have encouraged all stakeholder groups to input to the management plan.

By considering all points of view before the meeting, it is hoped grower, industry and government groups will be able to resolve any outstanding issues



PCN in the field

and come to a consensus as to the content of the final plan. The plan will then be distributed broadly for comment.

Gordon Berg, Russell Sully and Peter Merriman  
Department of Primary Industries, VIC

☎ (03) 9210 9222

✉ [gordon.berg@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:gordon.berg@dpi.vic.gov.au)

### Managing virus diseases of potato crops

**Potato leafroll virus & Tomato spotted wilt virus**

A new video is now available containing information on all aspects of managing the two main insect transmitted viruses in Australian potato crops - potato leafroll virus and tomato spotted wilt virus.

The video, completed in May 2003, runs for 38 minutes covering topics such as virus symptoms, source and spread of virus, vector monitoring, vector management and complete virus management.

The video is available in Australia for \$22.50 including GST and postage - contact Roseworthy Information Centre on 1800 356 446.

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Horticulture Australia

# R&D funding and the GVP Cap what's it all about?

Gross Value of Production (GVP) of the Australian horticulture industry is the figure used by the Federal Government to determine the maximum Government investment in horticultural research and development through Horticulture Australia. GVP is defined as the value of production of a good at the first point of sale. This can be calculated by multiplying production (tonnes) by the unit value (\$ per tonne) at the first point of sale.

In Horticulture Australia's view, the value of Australian horticulture has been underestimated in the past. In an effort to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the value of Australian horticulture, Horticulture Australia has been in negotiations with the Government on behalf of industry.

Horticulture Australia has the ability to provide funding (dollar for dollar through Commonwealth funds) for R&D activities to a limit of 1% of the GVP (0.5 per cent industry plus 0.5 per cent matched by the Government). This is referred to as the GVP cap. As mentioned, through negotiations with Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests Australia (AFFA) and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics (ABARE), a new GVP cap figure of \$61.9 million was agreed for 2003-04.

## Definitions

**Gross Value of Production (GVP)** = value of production of a good at the first point of sale.

**GVP cap** = total matched funding limit allowable for horticulture research and development. (Set by AFFA at \$61.9 million).

While the GVP cap has increased, applications seeking matched funding have also increased and at a faster rate. Therefore, as with any limited resource, the mechanism to determine who gets the extra funding has to be open and contestable across the whole horticultural industry.

What does this mean for the potato industry R&D program? Projects that fit within the potato industry's budget for 2003-04 are being processed by standard Horticulture Australia review and approval procedures – these amount to about \$2 million. The potato industry also has several proposals seeking funding not included in its budget. These "above budget" proposals are being reviewed in two parts:

- About \$2 million has been set aside for levy and industry endorsed Voluntary Contribution (VC) proposals to be allocated on a contestable basis on 19 November.
- The remaining funds will be allocated on 13 January on a contestable basis between any remaining levy and industry endorsed VC proposals and all other VC proposals.

Potato Australia has a full summary of all current and completed projects in the potato program.

John Oakeshott

Horticulture Australia Limited

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John.Oakeshott@horticulture.com.au

# CropTest Market Research

Market research was carried out in August – September to seek input into how the CropTest – Potato Crop Nutrient Evaluation System could be improved to meet industry needs.

CropTest was withdrawn from sale due to software incompatibilities with the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. Given the need to update the package, the Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) considered it a good opportunity to seek industry input as to whether there was still a need for it, and if so, what improvements needed to be made.

## What is CropTest

CropTest is a nutrient evaluation package consisting of a manual and a software program. Growers, advisers and researchers use it as an information source, an aid to identifying nutrient deficiencies and toxicities and to interpret tissue test results.

CropTest was funded by industry and government and developed by Norbert Maier and his team at the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

## Market research

To assess the viability of repackaging CropTest, Horticulture Australia commissioned McGregor Tan Research to examine the industry's needs for such a product.

The research consisted of:

- 10 structured in-depth interviews of current users
- evaluation of the software package by twelve potato farmers (and service providers) who had never used it
- a telephone survey of 297 people (The survey included responses from growers in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, and New South Wales. Potato industry service providers were also interviewed across these states and Victoria.)

## Do we need CropTest?

78% of respondents indicated they would be likely to use a tool to assist them with nutrient evaluation of potato crops, with almost half (46%) indicating they would be very likely.

The results confirmed a clear need for a nutrient evaluation package and except for the soil testing area, CropTest largely met that need. However, there is room for improvement to make it easier to use, quicker to access and in a form readily understood by growers and yet detailed enough for technical advisors.

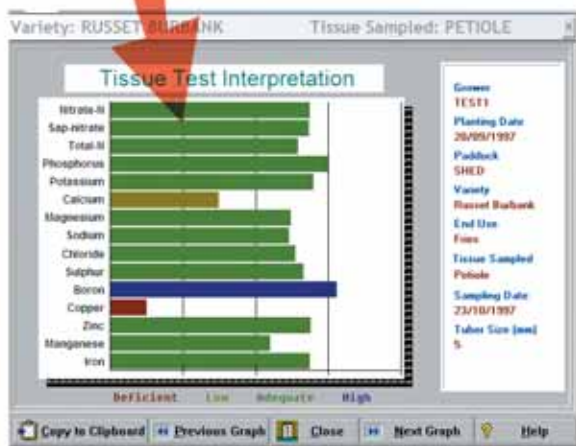
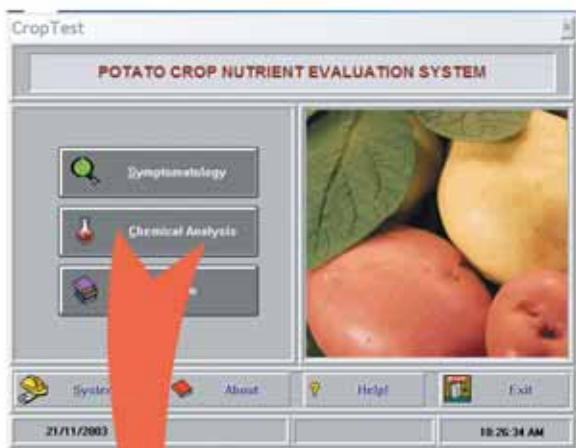
The central issue facing CropTest is how to bridge the gap between a package containing quality technical nutrient evaluation information and one that is an effective nutrient evaluation tool for the industry.

## Nutrient Evaluation in the Potato Industry

As might be expected, soil testing (76%) was the most frequently mentioned way of evaluating potato crop nutrients. Interestingly, more than half (53%) of all respondents indicated they plant tissue test in the growing season.

A significant number (77%) of respondents indicated that they soil tested before planting all crops, while more than half of those who tissue tested indicated they did so more than once every four weeks.

Most (79%) of those interviewed indicated they seek information on nutrients and potato crop nutrition. Many looked to consultants, fertiliser companies, sales staff and processing company field officers for this information. Potato Australia and Eyes on Potatoes were mentioned by 17% of respondents as sources of potato crop nutrient information.



### User friendliness of the current package

Feedback from current purchasers of CropTest and survey participants suggests Crop Test needs to be easier to navigate.

Broadly, they suggested modifying the package to:

**“Try and reduce the amount that you need to be a scientist, and increase the grower useability.” – consultant**

Importantly, the time available for growers and service providers to investigate a complex package such as CropTest is limited. Therefore, it is essential for the program to be easy to use, and grab a user’s attention by quickly providing desired outputs without forcing users to probe for information.

### Importance of specific features

As anticipated, the most important features (according to phone survey respondents) were interpretation of tissue test results and symptom keys to identify which nutrients are deficient or toxic.

It was apparent that growers valued the visual features of the CropTest package, such as graphs and photos, more highly than the service providers interviewed.

Following on from the suggestions made in the qualitative research, some potential new features that could be included in a redeveloped CropTest package were tested.

From the responses, it was clear it was very important for nutrient standards to be specific to soil types as well as varieties. Service providers in particular also felt inclusion of internet updates for varieties and standards would be an important feature.

### Assessment of feasibility

Taking into account the Horticulture Australia’s objectives, the feasibility of redeveloping and updating the CropTest software package hinges on the balance between maximising benefit to the potato industry while ensuring funds are used most effectively.

The market research contains extensive information relating to the causes of low sales levels for the CropTest package, and suggestions to improve the package. This information provides a sound base from which to modify CropTest to better suit industry needs.

### In conclusion

CropTest was first designed to help the service industry provide a better nutrition service for growers. The opportunity now is to broaden its focus to include growers.

The experience gained by Norbert and his team and results from the market research provides a solid foundation for redevelopment of the package.

A funding proposal with options on redeveloping CropTest is being put together for consideration by the Potato IAC in March.

I like to thank all the farmers, service industry and processing field staff who participated or assisted in the market research. Your support is very important.

*The above report was based on edited extracts from research carried out by McGregor Tan Research. The report will be available from Horticulture Australia early in the New Year and is titled – “Market research for potato nutrition software” (PT03055).*

Leigh Walters  
 Technology Transfer Manager  
 Australian Potato Industry  
 ☎ (08) 8232 5555  
 ✉ [lwalters@saff.com.au](mailto:lwalters@saff.com.au)



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# AUSHORT Project Updates



## Horticulture Australia

### Developing a strategy to attract young people to horticulture

Australia's horticultural industries provide major benefits to the Australian community. Besides providing nutritious food for people to eat, they produce domestic and export income for Australia, and contribute to maintaining vibrant rural communities.

To continue to provide these benefits and remain globally competitive, horticulture must attract well-trained young people to drive adoption of new/improved technology and manage horticultural enterprises to a new, higher level of international competitiveness.

Unfortunately, young people are not being attracted to horticulture/agriculture.

Internationally, universities report declining numbers of students registering for horticulture/agricultural science courses. Other evidence also indicates that fewer bright young people are entering the industry.

One possible reason for the lack of interest is that young people do not see a career path in the industry.

One of the few rural industries attracting young people is the wine industry. In contrast to horticulture, it has a larger number of corporations able to provide career paths and professional employment.

This project will look at this issue in more detail to better understand the reasons why young people are not attracted to the industry and what can be done about it.

*Russell Soderlund*  
Horticulture Australia

☎ 03 9210 9365

✉ [Russell.Soderlund@horticulture.com.au](mailto:Russell.Soderlund@horticulture.com.au)

### Freshcare – The On-Farm Food Safety Program for Australian Horticulture

With more than 1850 members (1<sup>st</sup> August 2003), Freshcare, the Fresh Produce Industry's own Hazard and Critical Control Points (HACCP) based program, is a popular option for on-farm food safety management.

The Program has wide acceptance by major customer groups including packers, processors, merchants, retailers and the food service sector.

Freshcare training provides the tools for participants to do their own on-farm risk assessment, implement the code of practice and maintain necessary records. Third party certification audits independently verify the program has been implemented successfully and is maintained on-farm.

Freshcare also gives ongoing support to members in all aspects of food safety management, at individual and industry-wide levels.

The Horticulture Australia project is now completed. Freshcare is a self-funding not for profit company owned by 18 Australian fruit and vegetable industry organisations.

*Clare Hamilton-Bate*  
National Program Manager, Freshcare Limited

☎ (02) 9764 3244

✉ [freshcare@freshmarkets.com.au](mailto:freshcare@freshmarkets.com.au)

### Horticulture gene technology communication program

Hands-on gene technology workshops have been held at CSIRO, Canberra and regionally in Perth, Ayr, Gatton and Shepparton to improve understanding of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in relation to horticulture.

Extracts of a bi-monthly newsletter, distributed electronically to growers and the industry, are included in Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia.

A full-colour brochure *Gene technology in Australia: What's happening in horticulture?* is in the pipeline, as well as more gene technology workshops. If you have any inquiries, please phone the information line on (02) 6273 9535, or email [info@afaa.com.au](mailto:info@afaa.com.au).

*Paula Fitzgerald*  
Agrifood Awareness Australia Limited, ACT

☎ (02) 6273 9535

✉ [info@afaa.com.au](mailto:info@afaa.com.au)

### Horticulture industries coordinated response to regulatory issues arising from reviews undertaken by the National Registration Authority and Codex Committees

The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA) undertakes reviews of existing agrochemicals. An outcome of these reviews can be loss of the agrochemical or reduced access.

This project resources the coordinated response to reviews, on behalf of horticulture, to the regulatory bodies and chemical manufacturers, as well as communicating back to industry potential impacts.

Another project aim is monitoring development of international food standards at Codex, the United Nations international food standards setting body, and coordinating industry responses where warranted. A newsletter is also compiled and distributed to inform industries of local and international developments.

*Kevin Bodnaruk*  
AKC Consultancy, NSW  
☎ (02) 9499 3833  
✉ [akc\\_con@zip.com.au](mailto:akc_con@zip.com.au)

### Review of Retail Grocery Industry Code of Conduct

For the past three years, all sections of the Australian horticultural industry that feel they may have been treated unfairly in their commercial dealings have been able to tap into new dispute resolution arrangements implemented by the Federal Government. These arrangements involve a voluntary Retail Grocery Industry Code of Conduct (this applies to all participants in horticultural supply chains), a Retail Grocery Industry Ombudsman, and power for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to undertake representative actions and seek damages on behalf of all, but particularly smaller, participants.

The Government initiated a Review of the Retail Grocery Code of Conduct to determine how effective the arrangements were as mechanisms to promote fair and equitable trading practices within industry, and as a simple/accessible mechanism for resolving disputes.

Horticulture Australia in association with the Horticulture Australia Council commissioned a whole-of-horticulture industry submission to present to the Review.

Richard Coutts and Carole Tate of Primary Business Solutions prepared the submission based on the input of a wide range of individuals and industry groups throughout the industry.

*Richard Coutts*,  
Primary Business Solutions  
☎ 07 3398 6318  
✉ [r.coutts@pbsolutions.biz](mailto:r.coutts@pbsolutions.biz)



# Horticulture Australia **AusHort Projects**

**AUSHORT projects are funded by all horticultural levy paying industries. The AUSHORT program tackles issues of common interest. The potato industry contributes 5% of the potato levy receipts to the program.**

This year there have been five new initiatives (see p12) introduced for which many of the new projects will now focus on. One such initiative has recently been launched and focuses on promoting the health advantages of fruit and vegetables to encourage increased consumption (see p9). The upgraded program will be managed by a new Industry Management Committee representing major levy paying industries.

Project title	Chief investigator	Phone	Page
Developing a strategy to attract young people to horticulture	Russell Soderlund	03 9210 9365	22
Future development of women in horticulture through the WinHort program	Cathy McGowan	02 6024 6834	PA
Horticulture industries coordinated response to regulatory issues arising from reviews undertaken by the National Registration Authority and Codex Committees	Kevin Bodnaruk	02 9499 3833	22
Horticulture gene technology communication package	Paula Fitzgerald, Agrifood Awareness	02 6273 9535	22
Implementation of the Freshcare On farm Food Safety Program ***	Clare Hamilton-Bate, Freshcare Limited	02 9764 3244	22
Review of Retail Grocery Industry Code of Conduct	Richard Coutts, Primary Business Solutions	07 3398 6318	22

Projects ending in late 2002 and 2003

Ongoing Projects

PA - Article in the last Potato Australia p74

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## Horticulture Australia Latest R&D reports

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

Building strategic alliances with young Australian and New Zealand vegetable and potato industry representatives	VX01026
Communication of management strategies for potato virus diseases in Western Australian potato crops	PT00034
Evaluation of internationally bred potatoes	PT01044
Study tour for Kangaroo Island seed potato growers	PT02039

The reports 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:

### Publications

Horticulture Australia

Level 1

Carrington Street

Sydney NSW 2000

☎ (02) 8295 2300

Fax: (02) 8295 2399

✉ [publications@horticulture.com.au](mailto:publications@horticulture.com.au)

## Potato technology transfer Survey 2003 – more replies needed!

Thank you for the 20 replies to the Potato technology transfer survey sent out with Potato Australia.

If you have not sent a survey response back, please do so. Your responses are very important for helping us develop the right information products to assist you in your work. Due to the small number of responses to date, I will delay reporting on results until March 2004 Eyes on Potatoes. Help us to help you. Please send those forms back! **Many thanks.**

Leigh Walters

Technology Transfer Manager

Australian Potato Industry

☎ (08) 8232 5555

✉ [lwalters@saff.com.au](mailto:lwalters@saff.com.au)



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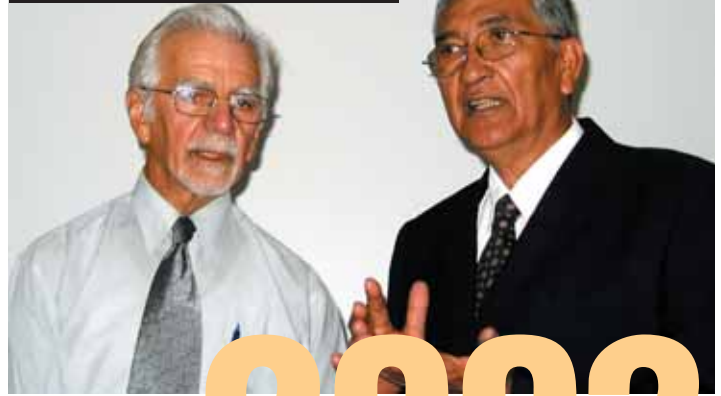
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South Australian Crawford Fund Co-ordinator  
Dr Albert Rovira talking to Dr Luis Salazar.



## ATSE-Crawford Fund Derek Tribe Award 2003

World-recognised leader in detecting and managing potato and sweet potato viruses, Dr Luis Salazar, was awarded this year's ATSE-Crawford Fund Derek Tribe Award at the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research Board dinner in early December.

The international award is made biennially to citizens of developing countries, recognising distinguished contributions to the application of research in agriculture or natural resource management there.

Dr Salazar's contribution includes development of highly sensitive pathogen detection and clean up methods, important pathogen population studies and sound training and information exchange strategies that have had considerable impact in developing countries.

His greatest achievement has been developing and implementing virus clean up technology for sweet potato – the staple feed crop in Shandong and other Chinese provinces.

Adoption of his work by farmers led to 25-50% yield increases from 1995-2000 on about 533,000ha of cropping land in Shandong. The same technology has been applied to Sichuan and Anhui provinces and potato production areas in inner Mongolia and Helonjiang. Since 1997, the net benefit at farm and village levels is estimated to be US\$550m, the greatest single source of impact in the history of the International Potato Centre.



## Horticulture Australia has a facelift

The Horticulture Australia internet site has undergone a major upgrade. Check it out at – [www.horticulture.com.au](http://www.horticulture.com.au).



# The GMO snippets

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

## Current horticultural projects

**USA** - Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have developed potatoes resistant to the fungus, late blight. They inserted a gene from a species of wild Mexican potato into commercially available varieties, and they have performed well in field trials.

## Market Research

**Ireland** - BBC Newsline recently polled its viewers in Northern Ireland on the recent announcement by USA researchers about the development of a blight-resistant potato.

When asked if they would prefer the GM potatoes rather than conventional varieties which rely on frequent spraying by fungicides, 47 per cent of respondents said they would prefer the GM variety.

For more information:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk\\_news/northern\\_ireland/3093837.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/3093837.stm)

**Australia** - In August 2003, Biotechnology Australia released a nationwide study of 500 crop growers' attitudes to GM crops. According to Biotechnology Australia, the survey indicated that, "while cautious, farmers had not dismissed GM crops".

Key findings of the survey were:

- 49 per cent of farmers were opposed to GM crops.
- 74 per cent of farmers surveyed were not considering using GM crops at this stage, however if the perceived problems of the new varieties were resolved, 57 per cent of growers would consider planting them.
- The main reasons farmers gave for opposing GM crops were that the performance was not proven (39 per cent); market access limitations (18 per cent); and potential for pollen flow between GM and conventional crops (10 per cent).
- About 60 per cent of respondents believed GM crops were likely to deliver benefits such as reduced use of chemicals (63 per cent); increased effectiveness of weed and insect control (60 per cent) and increased yields (64 per cent).
- 62 per cent of farmers supported field trials of GM crops.

For more information: [www.biotechnology.gov.au](http://www.biotechnology.gov.au)

## Bayer CropScience tour of Victoria

*Lockyer Valley (Qld) growers, agronomists and seed producers on Keith Ingleton's property at Thorpdale (right), Arnott's crisping facility and DPI Knoxfield laboratories (below)*



# State ROUND-UP

## VICTORIA

Victorian potato districts have changed from drought to flood. Kinglake, which was very wet in November, received 560 mls of rain between 1st July and the end of October. The cold wet conditions have put the district one month behind. Planting started in November.

Wet weather has prevented Koo Wee Rup Swamp growers from planting in October - usually 50% of crisping potatoes are planted by the end of October. This year planting started in mid-November. This will cause problems with delivery of crisping potatoes into the factory in January and February.

Thorpdale had a cold wet start to the season. Early fresh market crops were slow to come through. Growers with well drained slopes were able to plant on time. Due to the weather, some crops were a month late. Some commercial growers lost cut seed due to the wet start to the season. Most seed was planted in mid November.

East Gippsland had good planting conditions and crops were on time and growing well. Beech Forest had the coldest October for 25 years and cold wet conditions have pushed planting into December for most growers. Growers in the Otway foothills on dry banks were able to start on time.

Koroit's conditions were excellent at planting in early October and crops have grown well with no checks. Ballarat *Russet Burbank* growers planted at least one week late with the cold wet October. Late rains helped fill farm water storage on the Central Highlands, but some growers on the northern side of the range will have restricted entitlements.

The Water for Growth project is active with increased numbers of growers (about 40) trialing drip tape and solid set irrigation as a result of five years of low water on farms.

McCain's has increased the factory *Russet Burbank* requirement resulting in increased area of *Russets* around Ballarat. McCain's are accepting alternative varieties, mainly *Atlantic* for the wedge line.

Portland has been wet, although growers were a week late starting ground preparation - they will be able to plant in early December.

Certified seed sales in Victoria last season were strong. Crop health during growth was good, with near record low crop rejections.

While there were very low rejections for potato leaf roll virus (PLRV), some PLRV has been observed in two or three crops grown from Certified seed. Four districts will use professional assistance to monitor for aphids, thrips and predators. VICSPA has tightened its risk management for PLRV in newer seed growing districts.

Ideal harvesting conditions prevailed, resulting in a comparatively early harvest and good quality. More than 32,000 tonnes of potatoes were Certified, which is up slightly on the previous season's production.

*Bruce Fry*  
Horticultural Extension Officer  
Department of Primary Industries

## Western Australia

### Fresh market

After many delays, the regulated supply and marketing of potatoes in WA has been reviewed and confirmed after a National Competition Council (NCC) request.

The WA Minister for Agriculture has requested an Implementation Committee be formed to examine current legislation and recommend amendments which will improve it. The Implementation Committee will consist of representatives from Western Potatoes, potato growers, wash packers, retailers and the Department of Agriculture.

Western Potatoes appointed Ms Emma Kalo as Marketing Officer in September. This year's Perth Royal Agricultural Show was busy for Western Potatoes with increased sales of merchandise. Emma, who was heavily involved in the event, reported steady consumer traffic flow throughout, with many people expressing an interest in potatoes, noting an increase in new varieties and demonstrating increased knowledge of their nutritional value.

### Export Seed

Demand for potato seed in Indonesia has been high in the past six months with orders from West Java. Potato seed export is expected to continue to grow to Indonesia, while the first commercial seed shipment left for Vietnam in November. Sri Lanka, another new market, continues to develop.

### Seasonal conditions

The weather in the southern regions of WA has been cooler in early to mid spring than in previous years. Substantially more rain has fallen there than in the past two years, ensuring adequate water supplies over summer. Despite the earlier cooler temperatures, there has been a rapid rise in temperatures since early November, with maximum temperatures reaching 37.9°C at Manjimup and 40°C in the Perth region.

During November, harvesting of fresh market potatoes is continuing in the Myalup and Busselton regions and is almost finished in the Perth region. In Manjimup and Pemberton, planting is underway with harvest expected in about April 2004.

*Rachel Lancaster*  
Research Officer  
Department of Agriculture, WA

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The South East processing industry has started planting with damp spring weather slowing the process and creating conditions for a small amount of seed piece breakdown. The early sown crops have been tested with frosts, cool day temperatures and low soil temperatures, resulting in slow growth. These conditions will mean crops will probably be ready for harvest two weeks later than normal. The arrival of mild sunny conditions is keenly anticipated. A variety trial is about to be planted under the new industry arrangements for breeding and evaluation.

Murraylands crops have experienced severe frosts and wind damage with re-banking required in some situations. Low soil temperatures have slowed crop growth but should not unduly affect yield and harvest timing.

The Lakes area has experienced a cold and damp spring that has lowered soil temperatures and slowed crop growth. Severe frosts in late August and late September will also negatively impact on yield and tuber size at harvest. Harvest of the present crop will probably occur two to three weeks later than normal.

In general, crop area appears to be about average with the fluid situation concerning possible water restrictions and water quality not appearing to unduly affect the industry at present.

The seed industry on Kangaroo Island is slowly expanding and establishing itself as a viable option for some people.

*Bob Peake  
Horticultural Consultant  
Rural Solutions SA*

## **Queensland**

Although potato growing conditions have varied throughout the state, the plus side has been that consistently good prices have remained all year.

While some Atherton Tableland growers' plantings were affected by water restrictions, most growers' supplies were adequate for their crops. Early planted crops suffered some windy drizzly growing conditions, resulting in reduced yields. Main season and late planted crops have shown improved yield and quality. This year has seen a slight increase in variety production (*Kiplfer, Nadine, Valor* etc) as well as an increase in *Atlantic* for export. Due to shortfalls elsewhere, there has also been an increase in sales of *Sebago* for processing. Early crops came under some insect pressure that was controllable. Disease and insect pressure stayed low for most of the main and later planted crops, although hot dry conditions in a few areas did result in some white fly problems.

With 100% water allocation, Bundaberg has had a good dry growing season and produced high quality crops of average to above average yields. Helicoverpa, tuber moth and aphid pressures remained very low throughout the season, as did disease levels.

Water supplies have been a major concern for Lockyer Valley growers this season. Lack of water reduced crop plantings and poor quality water reduced yields of a number of planted crops. Late frosts also damaged a number of crops, further reducing yields. Those upper valley crops that escaped the frosts tended to yield well. While some early crops suffered white fly and aphids, overall insect and disease pressures were low for the year.

Darling Downs crops have had a hard growing season. Late frosts have reduced yield potential and hailstorms further damaged a number of crops. It is estimated some crops will suffer up to 40% yield loss. Pest and disease pressures remained low for the season. There should be enough water supplies to see the season out.

*Michael Hughes  
Extension Agronomist  
Department of Primary Industries*

## **New South Wales**

The late crop harvest started in May in the Dorrigo district. Crop yields were average, with on-farm prices going from \$450/tonne in May to \$600/tonne in June. The Riverina harvest began in June and ended in late October. While crop yields were average, prices were \$200/tonne higher than last season. Fresh prices went from \$450/tonne in July to \$400/tonne in August. Prices reached \$500/tonne in late October, when supplies of Queensland potatoes started to dwindle. Total late crop production dropped due to lower yields and smaller crop areas.

Planting of the early crop started in the Maitland, Dorrigo and Riverina districts in July. Fresh crop areas are down while processing areas were similar to last year. Despite a dry start to the season, most districts have received good falls of rain. While irrigation allocations are reduced in the Riverina, growers have enough water to grow their crops through to harvest. However cold temperatures, windy weather and late frosts delayed crop growth across the State. The early crop harvest started at Maitland in November. Crop yields were low due to the dry, windy weather. Digging will begin in the Riverina in early December and at Dorrigo by Christmas. Only average yields are likely and the early crop should be dug by February.

Sowing of the mid-season crop started in the Guyra, Orange and Crookwell districts in late October/early November. The late frosts delayed sowing by a week. Most growers planted on full soil moisture profiles. Mid-season crop areas are expected to be similar to last season.

*Stephen Wade  
District Horticulturist  
NSW Agriculture*

## **Tasmania**

The wetter and colder than average winter experienced in the State has resulted in some very late harvesting of seed and commercial crops from last season. Some crops are still not out of the ground – the latest they have been for many years. The wet ground has also caused some significant delays in the planting program, particularly in the Midlands region. Several early fresh market and processing crops were very late in being planted and this will impact supplies later in the season.

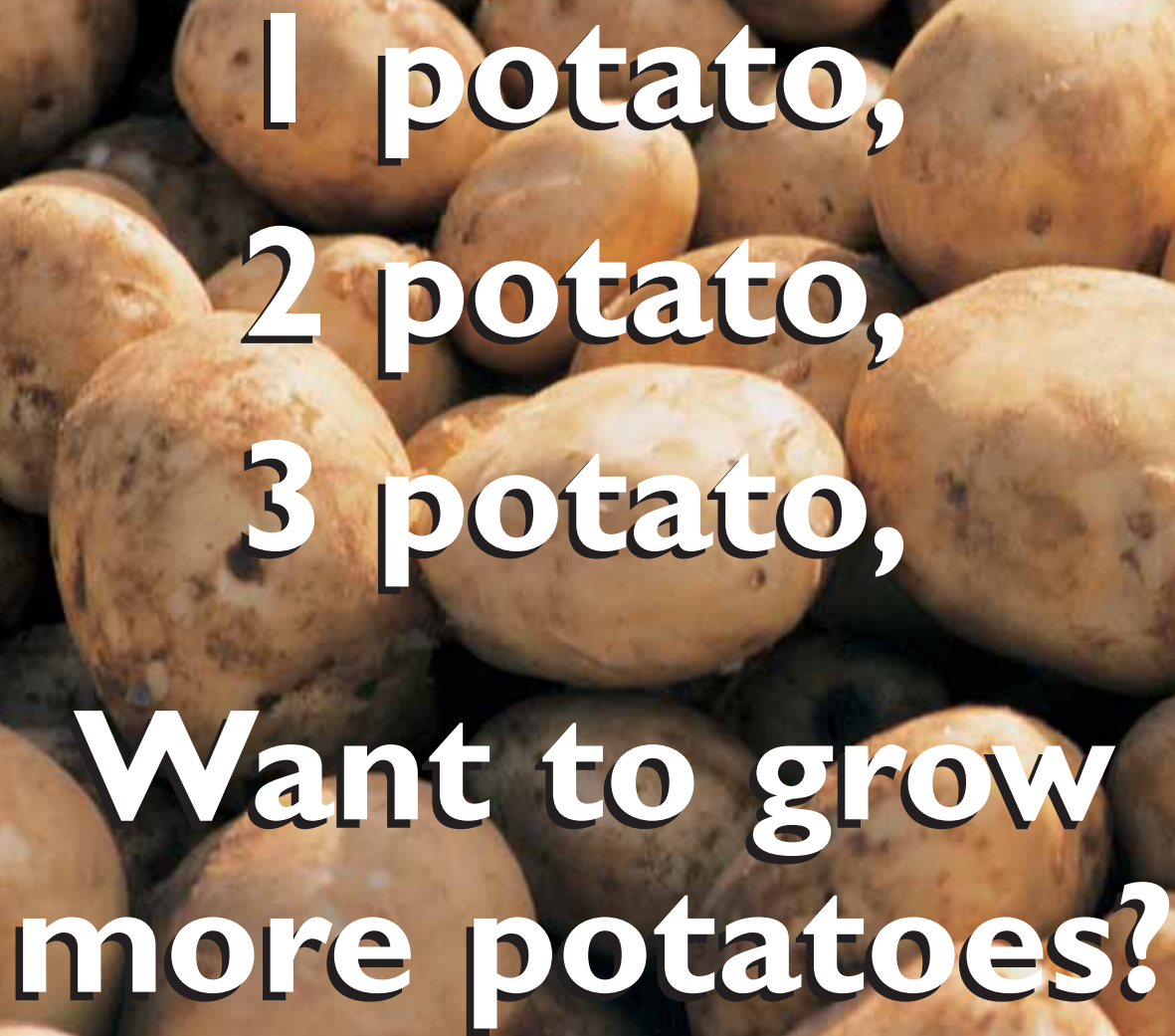
Some early planted crops have suffered under the very wet spring conditions.

Both processing companies now report that planting is progressing well and should finish roughly on schedule. The ground is reported to be working up well and companies have been encouraged to see that growers have been very conscious of soil conservation issues related to cultivating wet ground. Seed quality in general has been good.

McCains has been trialing seed washing this season and has been very pleased with the results. Both processing companies will look at a range of new varieties this season. Simplot is in the process of commissioning a new processing line at their Ulverstone factory. The increase in capacity will compensate for closure of its Scottsdale line, due on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. Forth Farm Produce has installed a new washing line which has significantly improved its packout quality.

Growers and companies are optimistic about the coming season. Fresh market prices are strong and expected to remain that way. On-farm water storages are full, and growers believe water supplies in general will be adequate for the season. Seed supplies and quality are good and everyone is looking forward to a profitable season.

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



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