

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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Biosecurity

Biosecurity is about protecting our industries from exotic pests and diseases so they do not threaten our markets or our industries' future viability.

A Biosecurity Plan is how we go about doing that for an industry. It will contain information on the major pests and diseases and protocols and procedures for responding to and reporting any outbreaks.

Whereas the livestock industry has a detailed national plan for dealing with major diseases such as foot and mouth, the plant industries have lacked such plans. Plant Health Australia is working with its plant industry and government members to address this issue.

Why it is important

Traditionally, Australia has enjoyed a reputation for clean, healthy and disease free agricultural production systems which have been aided by our geographic isolation. As trade and passenger movements between countries increases, so does the likelihood of a significant pest or disease slipping through our border defense – our quarantine system. Even with Australia's excellent quarantine system, there is also potential for harmful pests and diseases to enter by natural means (for example, wind, rain, movements of animals) or by illegal activities.

– protecting our industry

Industry and governments need to be prepared for such eventualities and be able to respond quickly and effectively to a pest or disease incursion to minimize the impact on potato businesses. A Biosecurity Plan is the basis for such a response.

As the potato industry has experienced with Potato Cyst Nematode, developing a national response strategy once an unwanted pest or disease is present is fraught with difficulty.

The blueprint for action

Plant Health Australia has been working with industries and governments to develop PLANTPLAN which applies to all industries, and Biosecurity Plans for each industry.

(i) PLANTPLAN

PLANTPLAN, recently endorsed by all PHA members, outlines the national approach to responding to emergency plant pest and disease incursions. The emergency response

procedures, roles and responsibilities, and decision making processes described in PLANTPLAN are generic for all plant pest and disease emergencies, and are triggered by detection of an emergency plant pest or disease.

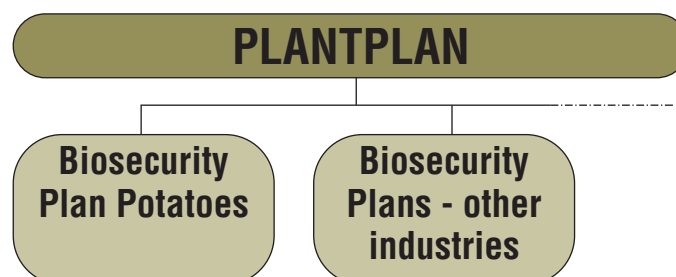
PLANTPLAN is used to guide government agencies and industries in managing the overall response to an emergency plant pest.

(ii) Biosecurity Plan

The Biosecurity Plan for an industry identifies significant pests and diseases for the industry and establishes procedures to minimise the risk of incursions and, if an incursion happens, respond efficiently and effectively.

PLANTPLAN provides the pest response framework which is complemented by industry specific information provided in each Biosecurity Plan

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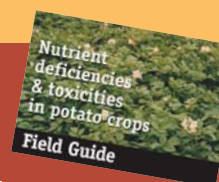


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**Chips #23 Newsletter
Seed Growers Guide**



Nutrient deficiencies & toxicities in potato crops field guide

This newly released field guide contains information, including photos, on symptoms of nutrient deficiencies and toxicities in potato crops. It also includes a key to nutrient deficiencies and toxicities, and information on other disorders that look like nutrient deficiencies.

The field guide is an extract from the CropTest Potato Crop Nutrient Evaluation System developed by Norbert Maier from the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

A copy of the field guide has been sent out free of charge with Eyes on Potatoes to levy payers. Non-levy payers can purchase the field guide for \$16.00 including GST and postage by contacting Roseworthy Information Centre on 1800 356 446.



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Biosecurity

– protecting our industry (continued)

Industry action

In June this year representatives from the different potato sectors and State and Commonwealth governments sat down with Plant Health Australia representatives to develop a biosecurity plan for the Australian potato industry. The first version of the plan will be finalised next year.

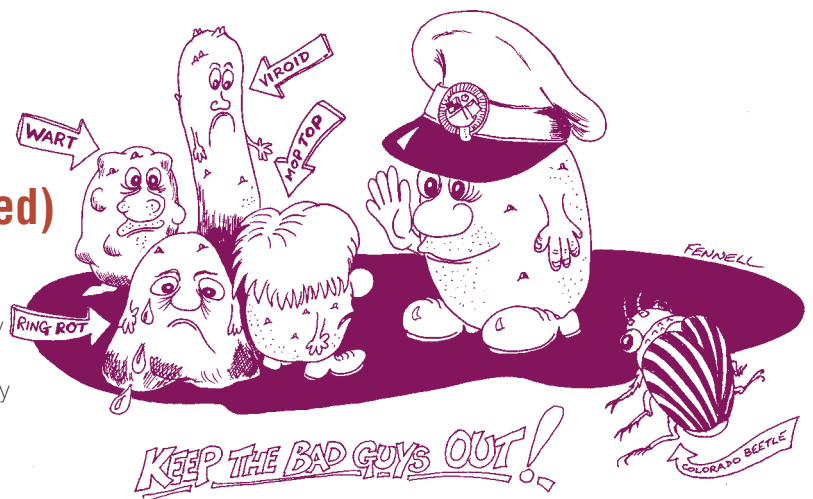
How can you help

Potato producers play a crucial role in protecting Australia's crops from exotic pests and disease. If a pest or disease does enter the country, vigilance on the part of producers can help authorities mount a quick and successful response.

PHA is urging producers to develop and maintain their vigilance, and take action if they spot anything unusual in their crops by reporting it immediately to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

The hotline links you directly to the relevant state authority that has the expertise to deal with the situation.

Ryan Wilson
Plant Health Australia
☎ (02) 6260 4322
✉ ryan@phau.com.au



Pests and diseases we want to keep out!

- Colorado potato beetle
- Ring rot
- Potato spindle tuber viroid
- Potato wart disease
- Potato mop top virus

More information to follow in March Eyes on Potatoes.

Plant Health Australia's role

Plant Health Australia (PHA) was formed as a central coordinating body to address plant health issues. With increasing global trade and movement of people and goods it is important that we protect our businesses. With many plant industries developing a significant export component to their business, the need for Australia to enhance its plant health status and plant health arrangements has become increasingly important.

PHA manages agreed plant health programs on behalf of all its members (including the potato industry), to deliver a coordinated and effective national plant health framework for preventing and responding to exotic and other emergency pests and diseases.

The activities of this industry-government company are funded from annual subscriptions paid by members, with extra funding from some members for specific projects. PHA members include the

Australian Government, all State and Territory governments and national representative plant industry organisations. The potato industry pays their membership through the potato levy and is represented by AUSVEG. PHA is a non-profit public company limited by guarantee.

Key priorities of PHA are:

- a nationally coordinated plant health preparedness and prevention system
- an enhanced plant pest and disease emergency response system
- resources and capability to quickly and reliably identify potential incursions
- information to allow rapid identification and reporting of notifiable pests and diseases.



Spotted anything unusual?

Potato growers are the key to protecting Australia's crops from exotic insects and diseases that could devastate the industry. It is important that you are aware of the risk, and if you spot anything unusual in your crop you should always check it out and call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Visit www.planthealthaustralia.com.au for further information.



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

AUSVEG

This project has received funding from the Australian Government through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Plant Health
AUSTRALIA

LOOK. BE ALERT. CALL AN EXPERT.

1800 084 881

Editorial



Well, another year has whipped by and it's Christmas again. Many thanks to you, our readers, for your continued support and interest in the publications - it keeps us looking for new and varied information on your behalf! Hopefully your year has been successful and enjoyable.

We once again thank all involved with producing Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia - our distributors in each state who continue to reliably deliver each edition, the Advisory Group who keep their ears to the ground and let us know what you would like to read and of course, our Technology Transfer Manager and Assistant Editor, Leigh Walters who

serves the industry and growers. Thanks also to ATM-Sprinta who continue to do a terrific job designing, printing and distributing the publications to all states as well as managing all advertising. So thanks everyone for another successful year.

Merry Christmas and have a safe and happy time with your families.

Kind regards,
Cathy Sage



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The secret to Mondello's growth

Mondello Farms at Virginia in South Australia was started by Basil, Frank and Joe Mondello, initially as a vegetable business in the 1950's. From modest rented premises, it has grown to become one of Australia's biggest and most advanced washed potato packhouses. Mondello Farms became a specialty potato business in 1994.

Brought up on a vegetable farm, the three Mondello brothers were keen to branch out on their own, but realised that they needed to do something different from the competition.

They had a vision of what they wanted to achieve, but knew they could not do it on their own.

Frank Mondello, Managing Director explains. "We needed to have a strategic plan that would be flexible enough for us to move around in, while still maintaining our overall goals," he said.

New plant, automated grading

They researched the market and brought in non-industry expertise to introduce new ideas and formalise the business to construct a new plant, using automated grading lines adapted from other industries.

The brothers analysed the market and saw opportunities for fresh potatoes delivered on the promise of quality, reliability and more importantly, integrity.

"If we could not deliver what our customers wanted, we let them know, we didn't try it on" said Frank.

"After a while, the customer comes to rely on your judgement and the orders start to come in on a regular basis. No one likes to be let down and so we used reliability as one of our key performance indicators".

Accreditation for business performance

Mondello Farms was one of the first companies to embrace quality assurance and its main farms, as well as the washing plant is ISO 9000 and HACCP accredited.

Basil Mondello is responsible for the farm planning side of the business and is a strong supporter of quality systems.

"It really made us think about why we do things the way we do," said Basil.

"It provides monitoring tools to assess your business performance and brings accountability to the farm workers."

Niche variety

To maintain their market edge Mondello became a sub licensee of the *Nadine* variety from Scotland. This variety with its good traveling characteristics has helped build up new export markets in Asia.

Regulatory pressures, commercial governance and more non-core business requirements make it even more important to stay focused on the business of growing, washing and selling of potatoes.

"The administration of your business cannot be ignored and needs to be monitored along with the rest of the business," says Frank

"Cost effective production, the monitoring of the farms through Key Performance Indicators and regular meetings with farm staff all contributes to a better operation."

Constant improvement is needed to ensure the operation stays viable. New markets and opportunities need to be investigated and assessed to ensure they will contribute to the bottom line.

Strategic alliance with growers

Mondello Farms grows a considerable amount of its own product and buys in from other growers.

"We try to build up strategic alliances with our growers to bring some stability to our forward planning" said Joe Mondello.

It also gives the growers confidence in being able to place their potatoes long term."

A classic example of this is the strong alliance built up between Mondello and Winpack in Gatton Queensland, who contract pack for Mondello at certain times of the year. The systems, machinery and packaging are exactly the same as at Mondello's.

"This alliance has allowed us to supply our customers all year round and makes us a more secure supplier."

Their strategic outlook has meant that Mondello Farms has recognized the benefits of supply chain management and uses this in its own operation, being involved in seed sourcing, growing and planting right through to marketing and consumer reaction.

As the industry becomes more competitive, with fewer and fewer growers left in the market the major packhouses are having to increase their scale of operations to keep up with demand.

With its constant monitoring of performance, its proactive marketing stance and its ability to supply all year round, Mondello Farms is looking to a long term future in horticulture.

Tony Clark

Operations Manager

Mondello Farms Pty Ltd

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Genetic engineering – where are we at?

In the past ten years, gene technology has become a reality, with the first crops being commercialised. In 2003, the global area of Genetically Modified (GM) crops was 67.7 million hectares and it is predicted that within five years, 10 million farmers in 25 or more countries will be growing 100 million hectares of GM crops, with the global market value expected to increase to \$US 5 billion or more. While potatoes represent only a small proportion of these figures (less than 100,000 ha), cultivars with resistance to Colorado beetle and Potato leafroll virus (PLRV) have been commercialised in the US.

Virus resistant potatoes using Gene Technology

In Australia and worldwide, Potato leafroll virus (PLRV) and Potato Virus Y (PVY) are two of the most important viruses of potatoes and can result in up to 50% yield loss. Both viruses are transmitted by aphids and are readily transmitted into the following generation by infected tuber seed. The viruses are currently managed by pathogen-tested planting material and insecticides to control aphids carrying the virus, particularly PLRV.

There are limited natural sources of PLRV and PVY resistance that can be easily introduced into commercial potatoes using conventional breeding strategies. Gene technology offers an exciting and practical approach to developing virus resistant lines, as targeted genes can be transferred into a cultivar without altering other desirable attributes.

Researchers from the DPI-Knoxfield and CSIRO Plant Industry have been collaborating for the past 10 years and have developed ways to genetically engineer virus resistance into potato cultivars. In this project, a population of transgenic lines of the cultivars *Sebago* and *Shine* has been produced with improved anti-viral genes.

The technique used involved a novel approach based on dual resistance, which to our knowledge has not been used before and is a world first development.

Viral Outcomes

The availability of PLRV and PVY resistant potato cultivars can provide two key advantages to the Australian industry - reduced yield losses due to virus infection and decreased use of insecticides to control aphids.

The technology developed and used in this study to generate virus resistant potato cultivars has provided the potential to introduce genes that may eventually improve resistance to powdery scab and common scab diseases.

The research has also shown it is possible to remove antibiotic resistance genes used in production of transgenic plants. This is quite important given the concern about the possibility of antibiotic resistance genes being spread from transgenic plant material to other bacteria, especially in the gut of animals and humans. This work will hopefully go some way toward allaying concerns and improving eventual acceptability of GM potato cultivars in the Australian marketplace.

What needs to be done

The promising GM potato lines generated from this project have only been screened in the glasshouse. Further work is required including field trials before any varieties can be considered for release to industry.

We have demonstrated the effectiveness of the PLRV and PVY antiviral genes to confer disease resistance in potatoes. This technology could be applied to any potato cultivar and is available for the industry to use.

Early investigations using the technology to develop resistance to powdery scab and common scab have been promising, but this area requires further research.

Where to from here

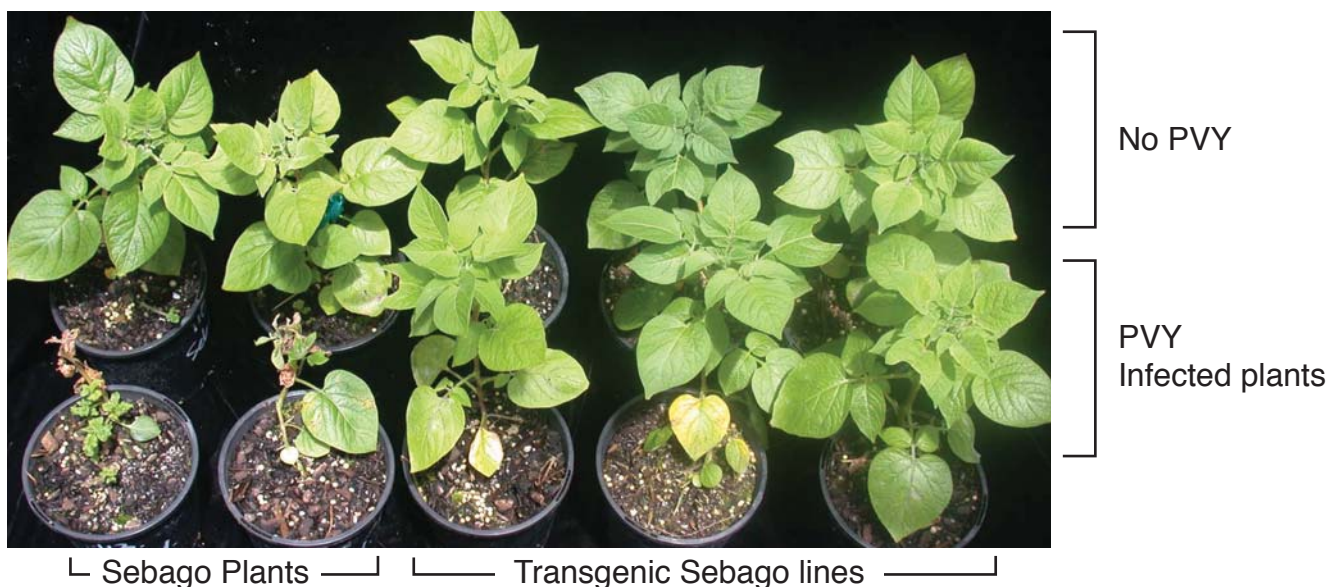
Although the research has been successful, to use the outcomes requires an acceptance of the technology in the marketplace. At present the potato industry has taken a wait and see attitude. We hope that in the not too distant future the marketplace becomes more accepting of the technology so industry can benefit from the research outcomes.

The authors are part of a project team involving close collaboration with Peter Waterhouse and Neil Smith, CSIRO Plant Industries in Canberra and Brendan Rodoni, DPI at Knoxfield.

*Mai Hlaing Loh and Daniel Iseneggar
Department of Primary Industries
Victoria*

☎ (03) 9210 9222

Non-transgenic Sebago potato plants on the left and three transgenic lines of Sebago genetically engineered with an anti-PVY gene on the right. Plants in the top row (no PVY) are not inoculated with PVY and have normal growth. The bottom row of plants (PVY infected), are inoculated with PVY, showing severe stunting in the non-transgenic lines on the left. The genetically engineered lines on the right show no effect after inoculation with PVY.



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The Australian Potato Industry Council meeting was held after the AUSVEG Potato Group meeting in Sydney on the 15th November.

HAL update

Simon Drum briefed the Council on the new Processing R&D Program, preparation and work underway in case the new strains of late blight enter Australia, and action to address deficiencies identified in the review of the breeding program.

Certification changes

The Seed Potato Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of APIC responsible for recommending changes to the National Seed Certification Scheme. One such recommendation made to the Council was deferred back to state grower groups for further consideration before a decision is made.

Skills shortage

Leigh Walters raised the issue of a developing technical skills shortage as a result of a decline of people being trained in our state departments of agriculture. There appear to be well paid technical

positions not being filled and some companies looking overseas for staff. This issue will be put to the AUSVEG Board for further consideration.

Annual General Meeting

The following councillors were elected:

Chairman – Geoff Moar

Deputy Chairman – Paul Frost

Treasurer and Public Officer – Tony Imeson

Delegates to APIC are elected by their respective organisations.

Notice of intent

AUSVEG has indicated they seek to withdraw from APIC and will be investigating the legal implications of such a move with the view of progressing the issue at the next meeting.

AUSVEG has had concerns for a while about the amount of duplication between APIC and AUSVEG and whether APIC was really needed in the way it had been in the past.

APIC has played an important role in bringing sectors together to work on difficult issues. AUSVEG believes the relationship between industry sectors is still very important but believes any problems can now be dealt with more efficiently through special meetings rather than a regular forum.

This was a difficult issue to raise but one that needed to be addressed.

*Geoff Moar
Chairman*

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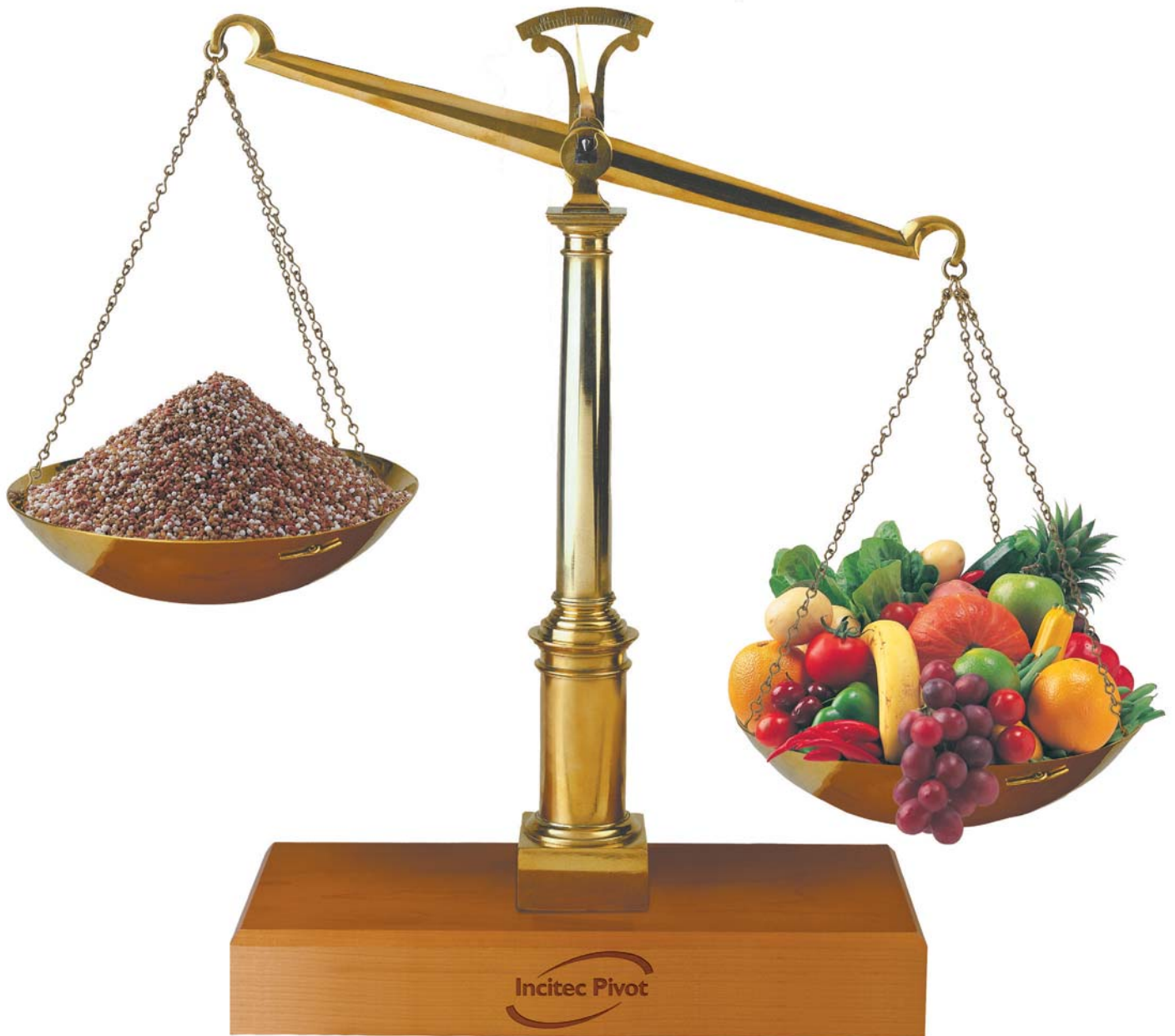
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Processing R&D Program

In October this year, HAL approved a budget for \$6.4 million (part of a total research budget of \$14.5 million over a five year period), for the most ambitious research program the Australian processing potato industry has ever embarked on to combat diseases.

With investments from the potato levy and Australian Government, there are also major contributions from the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), Victorian Department of Primary Industries (Vic DPI), New Zealand Crop and Food Research Institute (NZ CFR), and Agriculture and Agrifood Canada (AAFC).

Contracts with the various institutions will be finalised in the next two months, with the program well underway by March next year. Field activities have already started this season.

The challenge

The most significant production challenge Australia's processing industry faces is damage and losses caused by diseases such as common scab, powdery scab, rhizoctonia and tomato spotted wilt virus.

Potato diseases cause more than \$82 million a year in lost production for processors and growers due to rejections and yield losses.

Although we have made good progress in improving our understanding of these diseases, more needs to be learnt and better management tools developed to significantly reduce losses.

The difficulty of managing these diseases is not only being faced in Australia but in many other countries that grow potatoes. To boost our research capability, we will work with researchers from Canada and New Zealand.

By developing a strong team approach, we greatly improve our chances of making real progress to address the challenges we face.

The need for change

A big recent step was changing from a system of research and development where there was a call for projects to a commissioned research program approach. The new approach changed the focus to addressing major problems from an industry perspective rather than relying on researchers to come forward with good investment opportunities. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses.

In the case of the processing industry, the need to reduce losses and waste meant that the industry focus had to narrow so that the large funds required to make significant progress could be invested. The opportunity for a good return on this kind of investment is very high as considerable money is being lost due to the diseases.

However, this approach does reduce the range of research done, some of which, if carried out, would have provided good returns. Unfortunately, as an industry, we must make some hard decisions and accept not all good ideas can be supported.

The program

The new program will consist of six sub-programs:

- DNA probe tests
- Soil amendments
- Crop rotations
- Enhancing resistance
- Resistance screening
- Communication

The program is managed by a Program Coordinator with each sub-program having a Team Leader.

The DNA probe tests, Soil amendments, Crop rotations and Enhancing resistance sub-programs are new research initiatives that build on past project work carried out in Australia and overseas. The Resistance screening and Communications sub-programs are part of the existing Breeding and Communications programs respectively.

The program as described below is only the starting point. Already other research groups in Australia and in Europe have indicated interest in participating in the venture and these opportunities will be explored over the coming years.

What is being done

DNA probe tests

Better ways to measure disease

One of the main challenges in managing diseases is working out how much of a pathogen is present in the soil, on seed or in water. A relatively cheap test that could provide such information would be a very powerful management tool for farmers and researchers.

Choose a program name Competition

We need a name for our new Processing R&D Program. The Potato IAC and researchers have been scratching their heads trying to think of one but to no avail. So it is now your turn!

The conditions are simple. The name needs to be:

- Short and catchy so it is easy to remember.
- Not currently used by another group which could cause confusion.
- Reflects the theme of what the program is all about.

Put on your thinking caps. For the person with the successful name they will receive a copy of the new Kondinin book – The story of potatoes and one free registration to Today and Beyond Potato 2005

our National Potato Conference in September 2005 at Phillip Island. The winner will be announced in the March edition of Eyes on Potatoes. Send your suggestion with your name, mailing address and phone number to:

*Leigh Walters
Potato R&D Competition
PO Box 6014
Halifax Street
Adelaide SA 5000*

by 4th February 2005

The final decision will be made by the Potato IAC and the Technical Operations Committee of the new program.

DNA probe test

DNA tests rely on genetic markers specific to the pathogen, which can indicate the presence or absence of the disease (or other trait) in question so that it can be measured. An example is how much rhizoctonia is present in a soil sample.

This sub-program will build on previous work funded by HAL and Vic DPI to develop and deliver DNA probe tests for powdery scab, common scab, rhizoctonia and *Pratylenchus* nematodes. Initially, these tests will be used by researchers to develop better management strategies for farmers. Later these tests may be delivered as a commercial service for farmers, similar to the one that exists for Australia's cereal industry.

A big advantage with DNA testing is that one sample can be used to test for a range of diseases.

Once the tests have been developed they have many applications, including helping to identify new varieties that are resistant to diseases in our breeding program.

*Main research groups – SARDI, Vic DPI and NZ CFR
Team Leader – Kathy Ophel Keller, SARDI*

Soil amendments

Manipulating the soil environment

We still have many gaps in our understanding of factors influencing the pathogens that cause potato diseases.

However, research has highlighted some exciting possibilities. For instance, we know that changing the soil environment by adding lime or changing levels of boron and zinc and modifying various soil properties can affect common and powdery scab disease. Recent research in Canada and Australia has also shown that incorporating fresh organic materials into soil, such as blood and bone meal, can reduce the severity of common and powdery scab. These materials released toxic chemicals that kill or suppress the pathogens, providing exciting new possibilities for disease control.

This sub-program is about learning how to manipulate the soil environment to advantage. This will need an understanding of interactions between the potato pathogens and soil chemistry, structure, organic matter and biology. This may involve changing the soil by better managing lime and nutrient regimes, adding organic materials that release toxic compounds, improving soil structure or encouraging microorganisms that suppress diseases.

*Main research groups – Vic DPI and AAFC
Team Leader – Nigel Crump, Vic DPI*

Crop rotations

Refining the management of our rotations

The age-old practice of crop rotation developed over the centuries helps maintain soil structure and fertility and reduces diseases in our agricultural systems.

Previous research has shown that under the mild Australian conditions, some pathogens that cause disease such as powdery scab have quite tough spores that can survive for several years. Controlling such diseases through rotations is therefore difficult.

In contrast, other diseases such as rhizoctonia that causes stem canker and black scurf can survive on the root systems of other rotation crops such as fodder brassica and clovers, allowing them to survive the break period.

An important goal of the sub-program is to understand how potato pathogens interact with the various rotation crop species and how pathogen populations change through the cropping cycle.

Once developed, DNA probe tests will be used to track pathogen populations through rotations, providing insight into rotational crops and practices which do and do not promote pathogen survival. This understanding will help us manage these diseases with greater confidence.

The collaborative aspects of this work will be particularly important. The research team will work closely with processors and farmers to gather information, test management tools and seek input into the program's direction.

*Main research groups – TIAR, Vic DPI and SARDI
Team Leader – Leigh Sparrow, TIAR*

Enhancing resistance

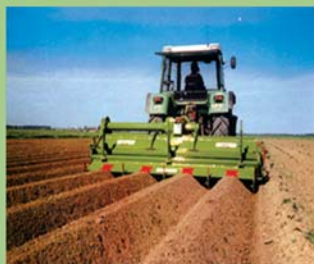
Developing future opportunities

Resistant varieties offer farmers the best solution for protecting crops against disease. Developing new varieties though is a difficult task, but in some cases it is worth the effort.

Previously levy funded work has established that the common scab organism produces a toxin called thaxtomin which induces disease

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symptoms in susceptible varieties. Research has shown that eliminating toxin production completely stops disease development. So if a variety has resistance to thaxtomin, it should also be resistant to common scab.

The work will focus on growing out thaxtomin resistant plants and testing them in the field. In so doing, it will establish whether this novel approach can be used to develop new varieties resistant to common scab. This work has been done using conventional selection procedures and does not involve genetic engineering.

Tomato spotted wilt virus is a particularly difficult disease to manage. It is transmitted by various species of thrips and has a wide range of plants that can host the disease. These plants include vegetables, ornamentals and many different weeds. Breeding resistant varieties may provide our best opportunity to deal with this disease over the long term.

Existing lines will be examined for virus resistance. Where there is good resistance to the disease, genetic markers will be identified that will enable DNA probe tests to be developed, which can then be used in the breeding program to screen for promising new lines.

Main research groups – TIAR (Aim is to expand the program)
Team Leader – Calum Wilson

Resistance screening

Improving disease resistance of our varieties

It has been recognised for a while that there needed to be better screening in the breeding program to help identify disease resistant varieties. The major obstacle to addressing the deficiency has been cost.

With intensive focus on common scab, powdery scab and tomato spotted wilt virus in this research program, the opportunity exists to gain greater efficiency in the screening process. This opportunity will

be further enhanced when the DNA probe tests become available.

With better tools and a system that is consistent with screening varieties internationally, our breeder will be better equipped to identify promising new lines.

Improved screening for common scab, tomato spotted wilt virus and powdery scab will be developed and used in the breeding program to identify new varieties with improved disease resistance.

Main research groups – Vic DPI (opportunities will be investigated with NZ CFR)

Team Leader – Tony Slater, Vic DPI

Communications

Industry reaping the rewards

Effective communication is essential to the research program's success. The Communication team is responsible for supporting the research teams in communicating progress and outcomes.

Most communication with industry will be through the potato publications, internet, group sessions, field days, advisers (government and private), processor field staff and for some farmers, direct involvement in field activities.

Involvement of farmers and processor field staff will be very important for the research and the teams will be seeking industry support at various times throughout the program.

The research program involves many widely dispersed research centres, so communication within the program is also very important. Team Leaders will have the main responsibility in this area but various communication tools will be produced to assist in developing good networks.

Main communication group based at SA Farmers Federation
Team Leader – Leigh Walters

Management and program structure

The research program will be managed by a Program Coordinator, Dr Rowland Laurence from the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research based at Burnie in Tasmania.

The Steering Committee will consist of the Processing sub-committee of the Potato Industry Advisory Committee and Program Coordinator, and will oversee the Program's direction. It will act similar to a company Board. It consists mainly of the industry representatives.

The Advisory Committee will include representatives of the Steering Committee, HAL, co-investors and the Program Coordinator. This important group made up of the different organisations will meet six monthly to review progress, financial matters and operational plans.

A Technical Operations Committee will meet regularly to oversee the smooth running of the program and will consist of all the leaders of the sub-programs, the Program Coordinator and a Steering Group representative. They will deal with the mechanics of running the Program.

Duration

The Program will initially be funded for five years, with the view of extending it given suitable progress. This is a long term venture with the aim of tackling some very difficult problems.

Funding

The following are major investors into the program:

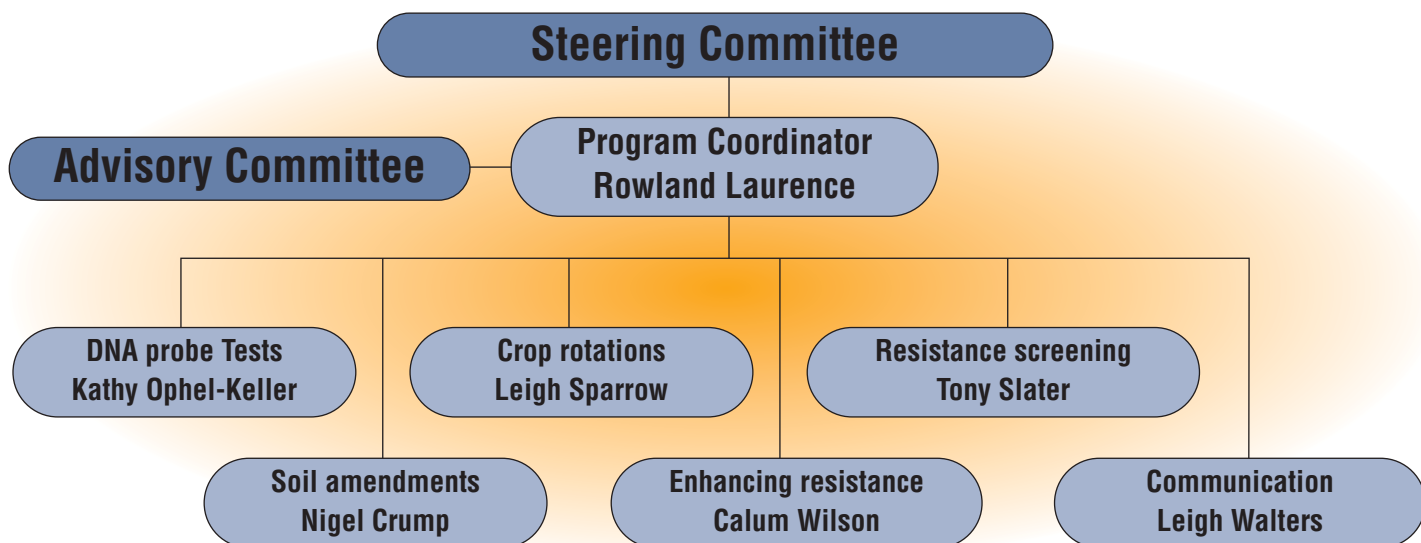
- Commonwealth Government (Matching levy and VCs)
- Potato growers (Levy)
- Processors (Levy)
- Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research
- South Australian Research and Development Institute
- Department of Primary Industries, Victoria
- New Zealand Crop and Food Research Institute
- Agriculture and Agrifood Canada

Commonwealth Government and levy money managed by HAL.

Additional investment will be sought over time to further build on the program.

It has taken a lot of work to get to this stage. I would like to thank the processing sub-committee of the Potato IAC, TIAR and in particular our Program Coordinator Rowland Laurence, our Team Leaders, other agency staff who provided specialised support and HAL. A terrific team effort.

*John Gallagher
Chairman
Potato IAC*



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AUSVEG Briefs

The AUSVEG Potato Group met on 15th November at the HAL office in Sydney.

Time to make changes

The number of meetings and level of duplication between groups such as AUSVEG and the AUSVEG Potato Group, and AUSVEG and APIC has been of concern to members for a while.

At the AUSVEG Board meeting, it was agreed that all six members of the AUSVEG Potato Group become part of the AUSVEG Board. Previously the Potato Group had three representatives on the Board.

This will streamline the meeting process and reduce duplication that was difficult to avoid as not everyone previously participated in both meetings. AUSVEG potato representatives will meet separately as required after or before the Board meeting.

The industry has evolved and there is also less need for an organisation such as APIC. AUSVEG has therefore decided to give notification that it will withdraw from APIC. If any special issues arise that require the involvement of processors and merchants, a special meeting can be called.

Most issues that require processors' involvement are to do with research and development and can be dealt with by the Potato IAC.

These decisions are not easy, but it is important that bodies such as AUSVEG strive to be as efficient as possible.

PCN

AUSVEG now has responsibility for the National Potato Cyst Nematode Management Plan and its finalisation. The Victorian delegates sought endorsement of changes to the soil testing protocol for PCN. Given there are a number of technical issues to be addressed to gain consensus on a national approach, it was thought these would be better handled together when the group had the appropriate technical expertise present.

Delegates outside Victoria reinforced the importance of working through this issue as quickly as possible. A workshop is planned for early in the New Year to tackle remaining technical issues. This may take more than one session to resolve, but it is essential that we come to an agreed position.

Marketing

Comments from one state retailer indicated people have been moving away from carbohydrates (potatoes and rice). This is thought to be due to the influence of the Atkins diet. Scoping research is currently being commissioned by HAL to better understand consumer perceptions.

Late blight

After hearing an update from Simon Drum from HAL, members stressed the importance of ensuring we are prepared for the new strains of late blight before they come in.

The importance of being prepared has been reinforced by recent experiences in Queensland with outbreaks of exotic diseases in other crops. Having an agreed plan in place means that when an outbreak does occur, industry and government can quickly deal with the problem.

Plant Biosecurity

One of the issues being discussed with the new plant biosecurity arrangements is an agreement to share costs between commonwealth and state governments and industry if there is an outbreak, which would provide the opportunity to reimburse growers who are directly affected.

The Grains Council of Australia, Canegrowers, Australian Banana Growers Council and Apple and Pear Ltd have formally ratified the Emergency Plant Response Deed for cost sharing and several other groups have indicated their intent to do the same.

Horticulture Australia Council (HAC)

HAC was formed in June 2000 as the peak lobbying organisation for the Australian horticulture industry. It has 16 grower association members, including AUSVEG, and represents 95% of the Australian horticulture industry.

Contact details are:

Horticulture Australia Council

Box 3700

Manuka ACT 2603

☎ (02) 6273 9600

Fax: (02) 6273 0157

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At this stage, AUSVEG is not participating in the agreement as there are still many issues to work through. Vegetables are a diverse and complex group of industries. Before any decision can be made, there is more work to be done to be confident that signing the deed would be in the best interests of our industries.

Ammonium nitrate

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in June 2004 endorsed the Principles for the Regulation and Control of Ammonium Nitrate. The purpose of the proposed regulation is to establish a nationally consistent, effective and integrated approach to control access to security sensitive ammonium nitrate to those with a legitimate need such as farmers.

The onerous requirements of the proposed regulation have the members concerned, with state associations looking at the issue in more detail. As all state governments have endorsed the principles, it may prove difficult to oppose any changes.

National Conference

Laura Logan and Des Jennings from Victoria talked about the National Conference in September 2005 and encouraged input from state associations to develop the program.

This will be our premier event for 2005 and I encourage farmers and others who work in the industry to participate. Many important issues will be discussed and it will be a great opportunity to make contacts, learn about what is going on in the industry and gain an understanding of what challenges face us in the future.



Laura Logan, Acting Executive Officer for the Victorian Potato Growers Council and John Tippett, potato grower representative from New South Wales.

Horticulture Business Code

AUSVEG has been actively involved with the Horticulture Australia Council to support introduction of a Horticultural Business Code between growers and wholesalers to promote fairness in trading within the horticultural industry.

This is a very important issue as unfair trading practices have been a concern to many farmers for a long time. The existing voluntary code has not been a success and therefore a mandatory code is required to deliver a fairer trading system for growers.

Annual General Meeting

As the Potato Group members are now all Board members, there is no longer any need for a separate AGM. Geoff Moar and Phillip Beswick were nominated as delegates to APIC to finalise arrangements for the AUSVEG withdrawal from APIC.

Dom Della Vedova
Chairman

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Horticulture Australia Council

Welcome

Welcome to the HBC website.

The horticultural industry has successfully lobbied the Coalition Government for the introduction of a Horticulture Business Code. Prior to the recent election the Coalition promised that a re-elected Coalition Government would, within the first 100 days of the new Government, propose legislation to give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission powers to enforce a horticultural code of conduct.

The HBC site will keep you up-to-date with all the latest news and developments.

HORTICULTURE BUSINESS CODE (HBC)

- Find out about the Horticulture Business Code
- Find out what it means for you
- Get the facts (fact sheet: PDF 24KB)
- An open letter to all growers (PDF 29KB)

Horticulture code of conduct

During the lead up to the recent Federal election campaign, AUSVEG and other members of the Horticulture Australia Council successfully lobbied all political parties to introduce a mandatory Horticulture Business Code as part of their policy platform.

The re-elected Coalition government agreed to propose legislation to give the ACCC powers to enforce a horticultural code of conduct within the first 100 days of the new Government. That process has now begun with initial talks being carried out between the National Farmers Federation (NFF), Horticulture Australia Council (HAC) and Government. The Ministers involved are the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Hon Warren Truss MP and the Minister for Small Business and Tourism, the Hon Fran Bailey MP. A small working party with representatives from Government, growers, and wholesalers will progress development of the code. A dedicated web site has been established to keep growers informed of the progress of the code at: www.horticulturebusinesscode.com

For more information contact Horticulture Australia Council ☎ (02)6273 9600 or AUSVEG ☎ (03)9544 8098.



The AUSVEG Team – Jonathan Eccles (Industry Development Manager), Leanne Griffin (Economic Research Officer), Elisa Maguire (Communications Manager) and Euan Laird (Chief Executive Officer)

AUSVEG new home

Contact details for AUSVEG's new national office are:

AUSVEG
Suite 9
756 Blackburn Road
Clayton North VIC 3168
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Changes to potato marketing in WA

Last July, the Minister of Agriculture, following a review of compliance to the national competition policy, announced changes to potato marketing and regulation in WA.

The major change will be a separation of the regulatory and commercial activities of the Potato Marketing Corporation (PMC).

The PMC will continue to regulate domestic supply and the price paid to growers. Its commercial activities, for example exports, will be transferred to a new, grower-owned company. This company will give growers more say in the marketing, promotion and export of their produce.

Two other changes are worth reporting. Payments to growers will now be arranged so production of new varieties is encouraged. Also growers will now be licensed to produce a specified tonnage rather than grow a set area as before.

A new PMC Board has been appointed with an independent chairperson, Deborah Pitter. Deborah was a member of the previous Board. Grower members Sam Calameri and Andrew Tempira are also on the new Board. Eddy Atchison has been appointed to represent potato merchants. David Sash and Bert Russell will stay as Board members to assist with the transition to a new structure.

Peter Dawson

Department of Agriculture, WA

☎ (08) 9892 8461

✉ pdawson@agric.wa.gov.au

John Rich retires

John Rich, Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, has resigned after 23 years of dedicated service. John has ably represented Tasmanian potato grower groups from McCain Processed and Seed, Simplot Processed and Seed and the Fresh Market Growers of Seed and Ware.

Nationally, he has been involved with Potato Growers of Australia, the Australian Potato Industry Council and Ausveg and Federal Government advisory groups on incursion management for exotic pest and disease outbreaks, and broad horticultural issues.

As a current member of Horticulture Australia Limited's Industry Management Committee, John represents 23 horticulture groups, including potatoes. Internationally, he has participated in Australian and New Zealand grower conferences, and grower delegations and study tours to the United States (US), Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, Holland, New Zealand and China.

He has strong links with the US Potato Board and North American Potato Marketing Association which represents US and Canadian grower organisations. He is also Australian / New Zealand representative on the World Potato Congress Advisory Committee and chairs the WPC Awards Committee. In future, John will work with AgTour Australia, to help plan and develop grower group tours here and overseas.

Potato Growers and industry representatives wanting to register interest in a tour to the United States leading up to the next World Potato Congress, Boise, Idaho in August 2006 are invited to contact John at ✉ john.rich@agtour.com.au

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Order of Australia to Cathy McGowan

Congratulations to Cathy McGowan, who was made an Officer of the Order of Australia on the Queen's birthday in June 2004. The award recognised her extensive services to rural women, raising awareness of and stimulating debate about issues affecting women in regional, rural and remote areas.

Cathy has been at the helm of the HAL-funded WinHort project since its inception four years ago. WinHort encourages rural women to develop skills to assume decision-making roles in business, such as planning and policy development.

Cathy has also been part of a government advisory committee on the World Trade Organisation, Chair of the Regional Women's Advisory Council offering policy advice to the Deputy Prime Minister and his department, and president of the national organisation, Australian Women in Agriculture.

She is an academic as well as farmer and consultant. Her experience includes researching effective services for rural communities, such as childcare and palliative care and design and presentation of leadership and change management programs for agricultural industries.

She holds a Master of Applied Science in Agriculture and Rural Development, a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education. She is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and a Churchill Fellow. In 2001 her work with the dairy industry won an international award for excellence in extension.



Ross Elsley, Regional General Manager (NSW/ACT), Commonwealth Bank presents the award to Jenny Weir

Business award for Crookwell

The Crookwell Potato Association was awarded the first New South Wales Business Enterprise Award (Population < 2,500 Category) in October by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. (One hundred and forty four nominations were submitted in eight categories.) Jenny and Amy Weir accepted the award on behalf of the Association at a gala ceremony in Coffs Harbour. David Montgomery's contributions to the Association's success were acknowledged at the presentation. The event was sponsored by the Commonwealth Bank, Prime TV, the Local Government Association of NSW and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development.



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Today and Beyond



The story behind Potato 2005

Potato 2005, to be held at Cowes, on Phillip Island, Victoria, from 19 - 21 September 2005, is the product of an enthusiastic committee of growers, industry people and others with no history in potatoes.

It has sprung from the biennial workshop that Seed Potatoes Victoria (SPV) and VICSPA have run for the potato industry for several years. With support from Ausveg and the Victorian Potato Growers Council, the biennial workshop has expanded to become the national conference, with planning and scheduling now well advanced.

Phillip Island is an ideal venue as it provides tourism and holiday travel opportunities. It hosts the internationally recognized penguin parade, seal colonies, 'The Wobbies', some interesting history of early Australia and a host of other attractions. Cowes is a tourist village with sheltered sunny beaches and a variety of holiday accommodation.

The conference, to be held at the Continental in Cowes, will incorporate a major trade fair, excellent speakers, multiple choice sessions and industry tours. The trade fair will have over 30 trade exhibitors and will be a first rate display of new products and ideas for the industry. The Continental will be occupied exclusively by the Conference.

Horticulture Australia is the premier sponsor. They see this industry conference as a prime opportunity for people to review outcomes of recent HAL projects, and for researchers to interact with other industry people. There will be a special area at the conference for poster display and opportunities to view and order project reports and products from recently completed HAL projects.

The theme for Potato 2005 is "Today and Beyond" and the conference aims to bring together new technology and ideas to look at how we can do better and secure our future. Committee Chair and Chairperson of Seed Potatoes Victoria, Con Powell, expects Potato 2005 to attract 300-400 people.

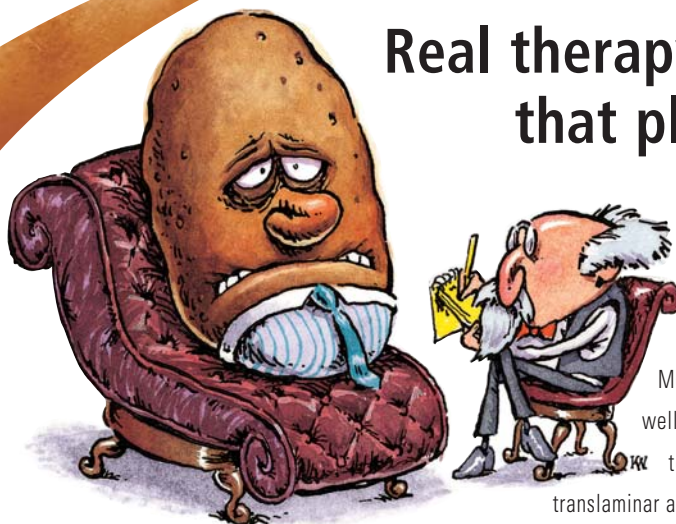
"If you see a long term role for yourself in the Australian potato industry, you really should try and get to the event," he said.

"The ideas, personal contacts and knowledge about what is happening in the industry here and overseas will all be there at Cowes.

"Its up to you to get there and participate in what should be a first rate conference."

Tony Pitt
Conference Convener
☎ (03) 5623 4788
✉ tony.agchall@dcsi.net.au

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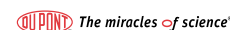
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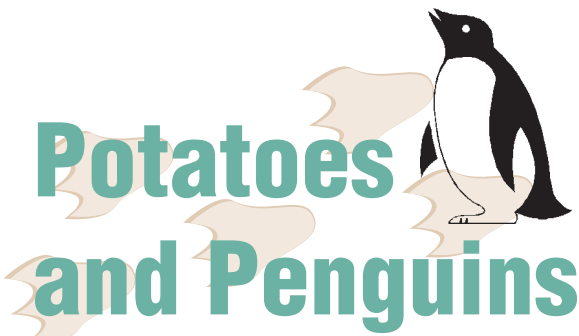
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**The 2005 National Potato Conference
Phillip Island, Victoria 19-21 September**

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- O**rganised management
- T**uning the technology
- A**ttention to water
- T**omorrow's trends
- O**pportunities for families

Leading national and international authorities will make this conference well worth attending. The venue, The Continental Hotel at Phillip Island is a resort-class venue on the waters edge. Make the most of this opportunity, as the end of September is a great chance to catch up with an AFL grand final and other big events in Melbourne.

Sponsorship opportunities are now available and the conference registration flyer will be distributed in 2005.

If you would like more information please contact:

Potato2005

Conference secretariat

PO Box 1349

Warragul, Victoria, 3820

☎ (03) 5623 4188

Fax: (03) 5622 0806; or

✉ potato2005conference@yahoo.com.au

Today and Beyond



PCN update

To prevent the spread of PCN from the Koo Wee Rup region in Victoria, a Potato Cyst Nematode Control area was declared covering the district in September 2004. This was after consultation with a wide range of industry stakeholders and a ballot of potato growers. More than 95% of growers in the district supported this measure, indicating strong commitment to the pro-active management of PCN in the area. Permits are now required by each grower to trade potatoes from the region to market.

With the assistance of a local grower, the Department of Primary Industries (Vic DPI) has run a second potato washing trial using PCN affected potatoes. The trial has again proven that washing potatoes using a commercial grade system removes PCN cysts from tubers. This means that processing potatoes that come from properties where PCN has not been detected after soil surveys, and that are adequately washed, securely transported and where factory waste is safely disposed of, have negligible risk of spreading PCN. This should provide other states with more confidence to accept washed potatoes from the Koo Wee Rup region.

Vic DPI has started a technical working group of experts from various Australian states which will examine the risks related to managing PCN in Australia. This group, which will be chaired by Victoria, should provide better direction for management of the pest in Australia.

David Beardsell

Department of Primary Industries (Vic)

☎ (03) 9210 9222

✉ david.beardsell@dpi.vic.gov.au



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exhibition and Trade Fair, Emmeloord, Netherlands

From 5-9 September 2005, Emmeloord in the Netherlands will host the international potato industry's Potato 2005 exhibition and Trade Fair.

The previous event in 2000 attracted over 17,000 visitors from 87 countries.

Conference registration may be available at a discounted rate (A\$900) if participants travel as part of a study group and book at early bird rate. Airfare discounts may also be available for group travel.

Potato 2005 will be held in purpose-built halls at the same grounds as the field demonstrations and close to the conference site.

Please contact John Fennell

☎ (08) 8389 8840 or

☎ (08) 8391 5358 ah

✉ fennell.john@saugov.sa.gov.au

to express your interest in attending as part of a group. Accommodation in Emmeloord will fill fast, so bookings should be made by January 2005.

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Latest R&D reports

The following HAL Final Reports were released in the past three months.

| | |
|--|---------|
| An agronomic and economic blueprint for using whole, round seed for processing potatoes | PT99022 |
| China study tour & attendance at the World Potato Congress, Kunming, March 2004 | PT03067 |
| Development of a universal grading system for ware potatoes in Western Australia | PT02051 |
| Disease management of potatoes on Kangaroo Island | PT02036 |
| Enhanced detection of potato cyst nematode and bacterial wilt to improve market access for the Australia and New Zealand potato industries | PT01031 |
| Evaluating a product for enhancing dormancy and storage qualities of potatoes | PT01038 |
| Minimising virus infection in early generation seed potato crops in Western Australia | PT02047 |
| Potato evaluation trials - Victoria | PT03026 |
| Potato tuber quality management in relation to environmental and nutritional stress | PT99052 |
| Seed potato workshop, Portland, Victoria, August 18 & 19, 2003 | PT03058 |

The reports are available from HAL for \$22.00 in Australia or \$US30 outside Australia including postage. Summaries of the projects and an order form can be found on HAL's internet site at – www.horticulture.com.au. Select **Project results** then **Potato** and use the search engine to find the reports of interest.

To purchase reports, use the order from the internet site or send a cheque with a note quoting the project name/s and project number/s to:

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Levy Payers Meeting

The Annual Levy Payers meeting was held in Sydney at the HAL offices on the 16th November.

A detailed report can be found in the 2004 edition of Potato Australia.

Other business discussed was exploring the possibility of having the next Annual Levy Payers Meeting at the Potato 2005 National Potato Conference in September next year. This would make it easier for more people to participate.

John Gallagher

Chairman

Potato IAC

Update Communication

It has been a busy year on the communication front. We have had a lot of new information products and there are many more in the pipeline.

New information products include:

- Potato Internet Starter Pak updated (released in March)
- Index of articles and HAL Final Reports (in Potato Australia 2004)
- Kondinin book – *The story of potatoes* (p24)
- Nutrient deficiency and toxicity field guide (p1)

There has also been a noticeable increase in industry information in *Eyes on Potatoes* (up from 16 –24 pages) and *Potato Australia* (from 64 - up to 74pages) in the past three years.

Eyes on Potatoes/Potato Australia

Cathy Sage (our Editor) and the team have been kept very busy with so much happening in the industry and the large number of projects underway or finishing up.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the publications, as it is a team effort involving the editors, government extension staff, farmer associations and let's not forget the authors who come from all sectors of the industry. Also thanks to AT&M in Launceston who handle the design, printing and advertising for the publication. They do a great job.

The story of potatoes

The children's book produced by Kondinin for the industry will be a great resource for families, schools and the industry. It is something we needed, as a lot of good material produced in the past was either out of date or no longer available. Thanks to all who helped. It was a big team effort.

New face

Trish Dempsey has started as Technology Transfer Assistant to help me with product development and to establish and run the new internet service. Trish started at a very fortuitous time in July, as a week after she started I went down with a severe eye problem. Trish and Cathy had to take on a lot of extra work for *Potato Australia*. I thank them both for their support during this period.

Index and back copies

If anyone has any comments on the Index that came out with *Potato Australia* please let Trish or me know. This was our first attempt and I am sure we can improve. If you want past copies of publications, I suggest you get your order in as we will be doing a rationalisation of our publication stocks in the New Year.

Work in progress

Other products near completion are a summary of research outcomes since the start of the levy, an Information Directory and *Potato Archives*. These will become available in the first half of next year.

Internet service

The final stage of the new internet service has just begun. Our national database system is being upgraded to accommodate the new service and streamline our operation. The internet service has been designed to compliment our publications and provide a range of new services. This will greatly improve our ability to provide the information industry needs in a timely manner.

New Processing R&D program

The Communication program will undergo a number of changes over the next twelve months as the new Processing R&D program starts to gain momentum. See p10 for details.

Communication Plan

A review of the Communication Program, mooted in the June 2004 *Eyes on Potatoes*, has been deferred for further consideration by the Potato IAC in March 2005. The main concern was that Trish and I have an extremely heavy work program over this coming period as we complete a number of information products and establish the new internet service. As the new Communication Plan was not required until 2006, it was felt we still had time to deal with it in 2005.

Have a terrific Christmas everyone!

*Leigh Walters
Technology Transfer Manager
Australian Potato Industry*

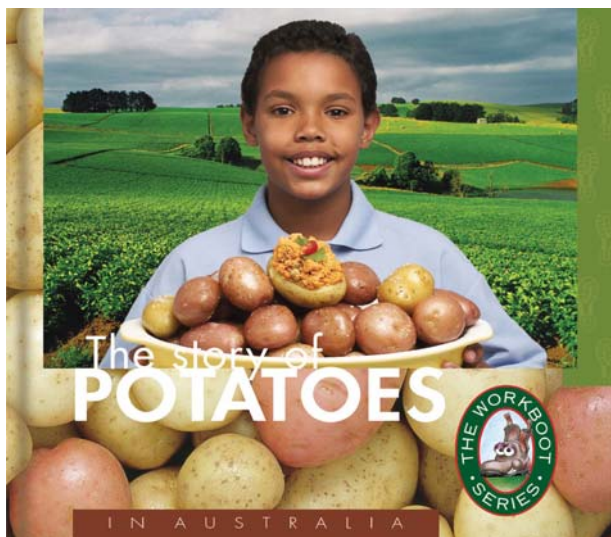


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The story of potatoes

is an educational and entertaining look at modern Australian potato farming. The book aims to address the lack of educational materials about agriculture for children of primary and secondary school age and their teachers and families.

If you have city friends, the book makes a great Christmas or birthday present for children and many adults will also find it very interesting.

It costs \$24.50 plus postage - contact Kondinin on freecall 1800 677 761 or visit their internet site at www.kondinin.com.au.

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SPAG brief 2004

The Seed Potato Advisory Group met in Warragul Victoria on the 9th, 10th and 11th of November to review the National Standards for the Certification of Seed Potatoes. The following topics were discussed.

Rhizoctonia

The proposed tightening of tolerances for Rhizoctonia at tuber inspections (a negotiated level between seed grower and seed buyer to a tolerance of 5% of the tubers with 5% surface sclerote cover) was not accepted by the industry as seed growers felt they were unable to meet the new tolerance if harvest was delayed by bad weather.

Potato disease lists

A complete list of potato diseases present in Australia was presented to the group.

A tolerance for each disease was agreed and the revised list will be presented to the industry for comment and if agreed upon incorporated into the National Standard.

Virus testing

The group proposed a common system to screen crops to determine virus levels across all seed growing states. This will ensure uniformity and statistical validity of serological testing where it is conducted under the National Standard. This protocol will be added to the Standards at the next reprint.

Passport System

The group debated the merits and drawbacks of a proposed passport scheme, which could be used as an alternative or as well as the National Standard. The proposed scheme allows negotiations on seed price based on disease and defect levels recorded by certification officers and made available to seed buyers. The group decided that, at present, the necessary systems were not in place to introduce such a scheme immediately and demand from buyers was patchy. However it was agreed that all states would move to improve flow of information from certification authorities to seed growers to facilitate flow of information to seed buyers. A scheme could be formalised in future if there was industry demand.

Potato Cyst Nematode

Tony Pitt (Executive Officer of Victorian Farmers' Federation's Potato Council) briefed the meeting on PCN developments on the Koo Wee Rup swamp in Victoria. Copies of VFF Management of PCN in Victoria will be distributed to SPAG members. There was much discussion and debate about various aspects of soil sampling and regulations that impose a 20 km radius around infested sites.

It was proposed that Seed Potato Advisory Group will write to APIC recommending it would be desirable to extend PCN surveys (beyond the states in which it already occurs) to all production areas in Australia to increase our knowledge PCN distribution and influence industry strategies for control of PCN.

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

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Potato IAC Update

The IAC met at HAL in Sydney in September.

Late Blight

A response plan for late blight is being developed. The committee have indicated the remaining work needs to be commissioned as a matter of priority.

Communication

Although recognising the need for improved communication in the industry, the committee decided to take no action until March. Leigh Walters is currently finishing off a number of information products, about to begin the final stage of developing the internet site and is involved in the new Processing R&D Program. See p23.

Processing sub-committee

The sub-committee focused its attention to the new Processing R&D Program which was to be put to the HAL Board in October for Approval. Full details of the new program on p10.

Fresh sub-committee

Marketing

Emma Kalo, Acting Marketing Manager for Western Potatoes, gave a presentation to the committee on the evolution of the organisation's marketing in Western Australia. The experience in the West clearly highlighted what can be achieved through a coordinated marketing effort.

In-store trials have been on hold due to the changes at HAL. One of the HAL staff previously working on the project moved to another position and the other left the company. Simon Drum is now working with the Professional Services section of HAL to review what had been done and get the program started again.

Scientific R&D

Due to development of the Processing R&D program, the fresh scientific R&D program has been on hold. With the Processing R&D program now finalised, the Fresh sub-committee will now look at the plan and determine any significant gaps from a 'fresh' perspective and commission work as required.

Vegetable IAC

The sub-committee looked at options for working more closely with the Vegetable IAC as some work has application right across vegetables. It was decided that a request be made to see projects from the Key Investment Areas to see if there are any activities that potatoes might invest in with the Vegetable IAC.

Fresh Breeding and evaluation

We have travelled a long way since deciding to review and revamp the breeding and evaluation program or NaPIES as it use to be called. It has not been an easy task and there are still issues to be resolved.

Whereas evaluation of varieties for processing has gone along reasonably smoothly, this has not been the case for fresh evaluation. The problem lies in the states' ability to fund the evaluation trials even with 50% funding from the Commonwealth Government. Not all states have the mechanism in place to provide such funding. To address the problem, an allocation has been made from levy funds for the next two years to help establish state evaluation programs. This will tackle the immediate cash concerns, but further discussion is needed on how the industry wants to tackle fresh evaluation in the future.

The National Conference – Potato 2005 provides an excellent opportunity for such a debate.

Correction – National Health Initiative

In June Eyes on Potatoes I reported the IAC was looking at supporting the national health initiative (Go for 2 & 5) and this was further spelt out in Potato Australia on p14, 20 & 22. The committee has since been advised by HAL that we cannot do this as it does not meet the criteria for use of R&D funds. The initiative will remain a major cross industry initiative of HALs as part of the Australian Fruit & Vegetable Coalition but we will not be contributing potato levy funds.

John Gallagher
Chairman



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State ROUND-UP

Western Australia

Harvest of winter crops near Perth has just been completed. Yields were good with the help of a drier winter. From May to October, 464mm of rain fell in Perth, about 70mm under the average of the last six years. Radiation frosts were associated with the drier winter. In susceptible areas, crops are protected by sprinkler irrigation. The prolonged watering needed to protect crops increased incidence of powdery scab, making it more of a problem than usual this year. Supply of potatoes was strong and some growers found Mondial hard to sell. Other varieties grown were *Nadine*, *Delaware*, *Ruby Lou* and *Royal Blue*.

Spring grown crops at Myalup (near Bunbury), Busselton and Donnybrook are growing strongly and harvest will be in full swing from November to December. The spring has been drier in this region too. October gales were not as bad as usual and yields should be high, so strong supply should be maintained.

Most summer grown crops at Manjimup and Pemberton will have been planted by now. This area is the major potato production area. Crops are grown for the fresh market, crisps and French fry processing. An increasing number of crops are being grown for export seed. The season has had a cool start but dams are full and prospects for the season are looking good.

Last *Round-Up* Rachel mentioned that export of seed to Indonesia had been hampered by quarantine regulations after potato cyst nematode was found in Java. Three Indonesian quarantine and seed officials visited WA in winter. This visit led to better understanding of the concerns of each region and seed exports resumed shortly afterwards.

Congratulations go to Rachel Lancaster, our usual contributor, and husband Steve on the recent birth of their first child Christopher.

Peter Dawson
Advisor (Vegetables)
Department of Agriculture, WA

Victoria

The last five summers in Victoria have been dry, but the wet winter has filled up most dams, providing a water supply for this year's crop. This spring, aphids have appeared in all types of crops across Victoria, so potato crops will need to be monitored during the growing season.

Ballarat *Russet Burbank* growers have very good soil conditions and moisture to plant this year's crop. Planting started on time at the end of October and early November.

The Otways had the wettest June, July and August for 50 years, with more rain in October - growers will plant mid to late November. Colac had a wet winter but dry October, so good soil conditions prevailed for a normal start to planting.

Portland had a wet spring but the soil dried out in October to enable a normal start to the year.

Kinglake had a wet October - growers have plenty of moisture in the soil and commercial crops were planted in October. Seed crops were planted at the normal time in November. Acerages planted were similar to last year's.

Planting for Koo Wee Rup swamp crisping growers was delayed for two weeks by wet conditions, starting in late October and continuing into November. The normal acreage has been sown this year.

Gippsland's early crops were planted in ideal conditions and are growing well and healthily. Seed coming out of cool store is in good condition with mild weather aiding curing. Most Gippsland crops were planted on time and in good soil conditions.

VicSPA is conducting its biannual seed certification workshop at Toolangi in December, attended by certification staff from around Australia.

Bruce Fry
Horticultural Extension Officer
Department of Primary Industries

South Australia

The wet winter experienced in most areas resulted in above average rainfall. This is a memory now as the below average spring rainfall pattern has seen available soil moisture dry out quickly. There has been some benefit for those growers who plant in the spring months as they have not been held up by wet weather, soil temperatures have been optimal, soil moisture levels have been supplemented where necessary with irrigation and planting should be completed one to two weeks earlier than normal. Frost damage has been minimal, as has wind damage and consequent sand blasting to young potato plants.

The French fry industry is planning for an average production year in the South East. The dry spring has allowed planting to proceed 1-2 weeks earlier than normal with warm soil temperatures and adequate moisture. Several light frosts in specific locations in the mid and upper South East slowed growth of emerging young plants for a brief period. Weather conditions have been generally mild and pleasant.

The Riverland and Murraylands have reported similar conditions with several light frosts and hot windy days causing some minor crop damage.

The Lakes area has also reported similar weather conditions with the production area and yield comparable to previous years. The October harvest was slow due to oversupplied markets in Sydney.

Bob Peake
Horticultural Consultant
Rural Solutions SA

Queensland

This year has been a mixed bag for Queensland potato growers. Agronomically, production has been excellent, but marketing / sales have caused many growers major headaches.

Wet weather at the start of the main season in north Queensland reduced the planting window available to growers. Those able to plant early crops experienced a period of low insect and disease pressure to produce high yielding crops of excellent quality that commanded high prices.

The main season crop, while also excellent in terms of quality and yield, has come on to the market at a time of slow sales and oversupply for brushed product. This combined with a larger than

normal harvest peak has seen prices plummet, and in some cases resulted in crops being ploughed in.

This year saw some continued expansion into the varietal markets. These markets have also been affected by the oversupply situation. The export market has continued at similar levels to last year.

Bundaberg produced good quality early crops that achieved good prices. Pest and disease levels were low or manageable for the season. The main season crops while yielding well and being of good quality have also been affected from low prices and some growers have ploughed in crops. Hot growing conditions suffered by later crops have produced a low level of brown fleck.

The Lockyer Valley has again had a very hard hot, dry growing season. Several growers did not have enough water supplies to plant. Growers with adequate water supplies have produced some very high yielding crops. There has also been an increase in the number of crops in the valley being grown with trickle irrigation. Target spot and tuber moth pressures have been present but at a controllable level. Some premium washed lines have managed to command good prices but overall low prices have also affected the Lockyer Valley producers.

Darling Downs crops are presently looking good. Aphid and *Helicoverpa* pressures have remained low, while tuber moth has been high but controllable. Disease levels have been low for the season. Water supplies are still of concern to growers, with restrictions still in place. Some sporadic light showers have been of benefit, but growers are still looking for more substantial rains. If rains do not fall, January plantings may be in jeopardy.

Michael Hughes
Extension Agronomist
Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries

New South Wales

Seed

Digging of last season's seed crop at Guyra started in late January and finished in July. Although most crops had high yields, there was no harvest carryover following strong demand for seed from the Queensland market. Harvesting of seed crops at Crookwell began in March and ended in August. Crop yields were slightly down on last year due to the drought. A firm demand for Certified seed insured all stocks were sold.

Planting of the mid-season crop at Guyra started on the October long weekend and finished in late November. Seed areas are slightly down on last year due to an anticipated drop in demand following low prices received by many Queensland ware growers over winter and spring. Guyra growers had a good start to the season with the end of cold weather and welcome falls of rain at the start of November. Excellent falls of rain in October and November have also ended drought in the Crookwell district. Sowing started in mid-November and will continue until mid-December. Seed areas are expected to be similar to last year at Crookwell.

Fresh and Processing

Fresh prices in New South Wales dropped over winter and spring due to a large surplus of washed potatoes from South Australia, increased production at Bundaberg in Queensland due to a downturn in the sugar industry and a fall in consumer demand for fresh potatoes.

Digging of the late fresh crop at Dorrigo began in May and ended in July. Due to early frosts, many crops were undersize. Marketable yields dropped by 60 percent, with much of the Dorrigo crop being kept for seed. Graded red soil table potatoes sold for \$20 a 50 kilogram bag in July, a drop of \$200 a tonne on last season. The Dorrigo harvest

finished a month earlier than usual because of reduced crop size.

Harvesting of late ware crop in the Riverina started in June and finished at the end of November. Crop yields were high but prices stayed well below average. On-farm prices started at \$300 a tonne in July (dirty, bulk) and dropped to \$180 a tonne by October. Prices were \$150 to \$220 tonne less than last year's. Oversupply of washed potatoes adversely affected the brushed market for Riverina potatoes. Due to the poor demand, the winter harvest was one of the slowest on record.

Planting of early crop in the Riverina was completed in August. Fresh areas are down on last year, while processing areas have increased. Dry spring weather and high evaporation in October required crops to be heavily irrigated over the entire growing season. Although irrigation allocations were reduced in the Riverina, local growers have enough water to grow their crops through to harvest. With no late frosts; a warm, dry spring; little windy weather and low disease pressure; early crops have matured sooner than usual. Good yields are forecast when the first processing crops are harvested in early December in the Riverina.

Stephen Wade
District Horticulturist
NSW Department of Primary Industries

Tasmania

Last season's processing crops exceeded expectations and with the exception of crops in the northeast, which were affected by heavy spring rains. Yields were up an average of 2 t/ha statewide. The dramatic improvement in seed quality seen last season (the highest rate of seed passing tuber inspections since they were introduced) has resulted in an excellent condition of seed out of store this season.

Planting of processing and fresh market crops is progressing very well this season and weather conditions have so far been ideal. All companies report being ahead of schedule and considerably ahead of where they were this time last year. This season, Simplot will only be using certified and provisional (field inspected not tuber inspected) seed and McCain only certified seed. Neither company will plant approved (retained commercial crop) seed this season.

A significant improvement in ground preparation has been noted by both companies this season and along with improved seed has resulted in an excellent strike in the early processing crops.

Response from growers participating in Simplot's Crop Management Service (CMS) and Seed Management Service (SMS) has been extremely encouraging. The service records environmental and agronomic factors, including soil moisture, soil temperature and plant nutrition, and relates these to crop yield in commercial crops and to subsequent seed crops. Growers and the Company are confident the information recorded last season can be translated into higher yields and improved quality in future crops.

After a few teething problems, the seed tracking service, Simseed, introduced last season to record movement of seed from seed paddock to commercial paddock, has performed well. The system tracks individual loads of seed through grading, certification, storage and cutting operations and records all information on a web based spreadsheet. The system has revealed a number of unexpected benefits to all sectors of the industry. This year the program will be expanded to collect a range of field information.

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

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